LIGHTS ON THE TANTRA

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M.P. PANDIT

THE AUTHOR

Madhav Pundalik Pandit was born in 1918 at Sirsi (Mysore). Early in life he came under the influence of Sri Kapali Sastriar, who later led him to choose the life of the spirit. He joined Sri Aurobindo Ashram in 1939 and has been closely associated with the work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. He is the Vice-President of the World Union International. He has written over fifty books on Yoga, Veda, Upanishads and Tantra and lucid expositions of the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

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M. P. PANDIT

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PREFACE

IT is not generally realised to what extent the Tantras have contributed to the spiritual and religious Culture of India. Attention has been paid to the legacy of the Veda, to the Wisdom of the Upanishad in a larger measure; but little to the Tantra. The mist of misunderstanding and prejudice that has covered the true visage of this Sastra has prevented a just appreciation of its role in the preservation and orientation of the long line of Tradition in this regard.

The present study is an approach to the subject in its central bearings, in the light of Sri Aurobindo's Thought. It closely follows the guidance and the writings of Sri Kapali Sastriar who first awoke me to the Truth of the Spirit and opened my vision to the vistas of Knowledge revealed in the scriptural records of the Indian heritage.

Three review-articles, written some years ago, are included in the book (Part Two) as they deal with the same subject and from the same view-point.

Sri Aurobindo Ashram
Pondicherry
28—8—1957

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I

WHAT ARE THE TANTRAS?

IT is recent. An influential figure in the political life of the country was suddenly taken ill with what proved to be an obstinate physical ailment. The usual medical aids were not of much help and he was obliged to submit himself to a high-pressure treatment for a continual period of six months in a foreign country, before substantial relief could be obtained. It was a mystery how he came to develop this illness at all, till one day his brother—himself a noted leader of thought and education—happened to consult a clairvoyant. And what he said was remarkable. He stated emphatically that on such and such a date, during the elections, the patient's opponent had a tantric ritual performed as a result of which the patient should have met with certain death but for the protection extended to him by his Guru (who, by the way, had left the physical body more than twenty years before). The illness was the direct, though arrested consequence of the ritual.

Is it possible for tantric rites to bring out effects of this kind? If it is, is this the character of the Science of Tantra? Could this be the Sastra that has come down the centuries, celebrated in the lives and teachings of so many men of God, claiming adherence of large and varied sections of the peoples in this land and beyond? What indeed is Tantra?

The Tantras or Agamas as they are otherwise known, have been looked upon as texts of scriptural importance. A tradition has it that the Agamas are the Fifth Veda. It is declared that each Age has a God-given Sastra to guide it. The Satya (Krita) Yuga has the Veda, the Treta its Smriti, Dvapara the Puranas and the Kali Yuga (the present age) the Agamas.[1] *Āgama* originally signified the word of authority, authenticity, and was applied to Veda. But later on with the rise of the teaching and practice of the Tantra Sastra claiming the same prestige, the word gradually came to be applied to the Tantras and the Vedas were generally referred to as Nigamas. "In dealing with the purposes of the study of *Vyākaraṇa*, Sanskrit Grammar, Patanjali uses the word *Āgama* in the sense of Veda or Vedic knowledge; and in the Yoga Sutras he speaks of three criteria of knowledge —Perception (*pratyakṣa*), Inference (*anumāna*), and Revelation or authentic utterance (*āgama*). Thus we find that because all sacred scriptures were considered to be revealed, the Veda was termed Agama; and when another class of literature, viz. Tantra, scriptural in import, appeared and began to hold sway over a vast mass of people, the term Nigama was applied to Veda while Agama though not exclusively but generally came to denote Tantra on the one hand and ensure its sanctity like the Veda on the other." (Sri Kapali Sastry) [2]

It is not possible to fix with any finality the date of the inception of the vast literature of the Tantra. Some of the main texts are determined to have been compiled in their present form during the Gupta period while some are comparatively recent. Whatever it be, certain it is that the tradition and the pratice they seek to embody is much older. There are references to the worship

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and rituals of the agamic kind in works like the Brihad Katha of Gunadhya and in Inscriptions which belong to pre-Christian eras, apart from their mention in the devotional outpourings of saints in the South dating from the second century. Considerable part of the Teaching can be directly traced to the Vedas and a striking parallel seen between the development of some of the Vedic concepts in the Upanishads and their course in the line of the Tantra. The fact as it appears unmistakably on a close study of these scriptures, is that just as the Upanishads represent the revival and continuation of the Jnana, Knowledge content of the Vedas, as the Brahmanas seek to conserve and prolong the ritualistic basis of the Vedic religion, the Agamas take up the esoteric teaching and practice of the Vedic mystics and go on to develop and build upon it, in forms and means suited to the changing conditions and needs of later times.[3]

" As Sri Aurobindo observes, ' There was a transformation of symbol and ritual and ceremony or a substitution of new kindred figures, an emergence of things that are only hints in the original system, a development of novel idea-forms from the seed of original thinking.... The house of Fire was replaced by the temple; the karmic ritual of sacrifice was transformed into the devotional temple ritual; the vague and shifting mental images of the Vedic gods figured in the mantras yielded to more precise conceptual forms of the two great deities, Vishnu and Shiva, and of their Shaktis and their offshoots. These new concepts stabilised in physical images were made the basis both for internal adoration and for the external worship which replaced sacrifice. The psychic and spiritual mystic endeavour which was the inner sense of the Vedic hymns, disappeared into the less intensely luminous but more wide and rich and complex psycho-spiritual inner life of Puranic and Tantric religion and Yoga.' Such knowledge as this—of the building of the inner life-was traditionally handed down from father to son, from Guru to Shishya and the Agamas represent a worthy compilation and preservation of this inheritance from the forefathers." (Sri Kapali Sastry) [4]

Bringing out the inner significance of the Tantra Movement, Sri Aurobindo points out how it represents a special outsurge in the expanding reign of the Spirit on the Indian soil. The Rishis of the Veda evolved and perfected an inner discipline and religion which was essentially intuitive in character and symbolic in form suited to the fresh and unsophisticated humanity of that age. The Upanishads record the beginnings of an endeavour in which the human mind is taken up successively in its different gradations from its summits of illumined intelligence downwards and treated to the light of the Spirit—a course which proceeded through the age of the Smritis and culminated in the Darshanas. The Tantric discipline extends the claim of God farther wide and deep; it takes up the emotional and dynamic parts of man, the heart, the will and the life-being and seeks to develop them too in the mould of the Spirit. The Tantra has thus been an important and even an inevitable step in the progressive and self-extending Soul-Movement of the country.

Like the Vedas the Agamas too are revered as the Revealed Word of God.[5] They are the utterances of the supreme Divine Person who is Shiva or the Devi (Goddess) or Hari (Vishnu); and they are known after the Deity who reveals the Knowledge, e.g. Shaiva

Agamas, Shakta Agamas, Vaishnava Agamas (also called Pancharatra) respectively. Adherents of these Agamas are the Shaivas, Shaktas and Vaishnavas. There are two other classes of Agamas and their votaries, specially in western India, the Sauras who worship God Surya and the Ganapatyas who adore Ganapati, all together making the Five Classes of worshippers, Pancha Upasakas.[6]

Of these the Shakta Agamas, i.e. those in which the Divine Shakti is held to be the highest object of adoration and the Supreme Creatrix of the universe, even putting the Lord Purusha into the background—a departure from the Vedantic tradition which gives the prime position to the Conscious Soul, the Purusha—are the most well known; and they have come to be commonly regarded, though erroneously, as the whole of the Tantra Sastra with the result, as we will see later on, that for certain deviations in one of the practices of this line of Agamas, condemnation is heaped upon the entire Tantra Sastra. We may note in passing that some of the western scholars have sought to read a non-Aryan influence, or revival of a pre-Aryan tradition in the Shakti worship popularised by the Tantra. As a matter of fact, there is nothing fundamentally new in the worship of the Devi; it is in line with the Vedic religious worship which celebrates the eminence of Deities like Aditi, the Infinite embodied, Mother of all the Gods, Saraswati the Goddess of Inspiration and Knowledge and other Goddesses. It is neither a new departure nor a violent go-back. It is a continuation of the same tradition which is to be found in the Vedas, as indeed in all the religions of the ancient world of that Age.[7]

II

THE FOUR PADAS

THERE are thus various kinds of Agamas forming the vast Tantra literature. But there are certain features common to all of them. They avow allegiance to the Veda and even claim to be the announcers of the Vedic Knowledge to the current Age.[8] It is to be noted, however, that their doors are open to all, irrespective of their social or biological differentiation. Unlike the Vedas to which access was confined only to the three higher classes viz. Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas, the Tantras pride themselves that their teaching is open to the Shudras and even to those beyond the pale of the four orders of Aryan society.[9] Also, women have as much right as men to participate in the full ritual of the Tantra—a feature which is notable for its absence in the Vedic ceremonial religion. Not only that, a woman is entitled to be a teacher as well ; some of the Tantras hold that initiation by a woman-teacher is even more fruitful. In practice, however, the Agamas of the Shaiva and Vaishnava persuasions have tended to continue the Vedic exclusiveness and it is only the Shakta Agamas which have thrown open their portals to one and all.

They proclaim there is One Supreme God who is the Creator and Ruler of the Universe ; the universe is a cosmic manifestation of the Divine and man also is an individual manifestation of the same Divine. Man has

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all the principles of Creation veiled in himself; his body holds the universe in essence and even the creative Power of God is there latent in him. To awake to it, to discover and release these powers in action, to realise his own godhead and embrace the large godhead in the creation around is the one Ideal which all the Agamas proclaim, the one Goal to which all their roads of self-culture and discipline, *upāsana*, lead. The way they show is the way of action, not withdrawal from action. To exert oneself in all the parts of the being endowed by the Divine, in the mode and manner intended by the Divine, for the glory and self-manifestation of the Divine,—this is the central truth of their sadhana. One has not only to understand, to know in mind, but to practise, to know in action; *act*, *tantra*, is the watchword of the Agamas and so they have come to be known as Tantras. This is a Pratyaksha Sastra where knowledge at every step is sought to be experienced and realised by oneself in action.[10]

The Tantra Sastra, embracing as it does the whole of man and his aggregate, is very comprehensive in its scope. Its range is covered by four great Steps, *pādas*—the *Jñāna Pāda*, *Yoga Pāda*, *Kriyā Pāda* and *Caryā Pāda*.

The Tantras have, in the first place, a Philosophy, a Metaphysic which bases their system. Broadly speaking, it may be said to be *both* Vedantic and Sankhyan in character.[11] There is one Reality, the Brahman which is Immutable and Ineffable. When It manifests itself it assumes the dual status of Purusha and Shakti and all action proceeds from this creative poise of the Supreme. Various accounts are given of the Process of Creation, the different principles or Tattwas, the birth and formation of the archetypes and the evolution of Man in the gradation of created beings. The movement of manifestation is conceived as springing from a Fount of Bliss, Brahmananda, and the realisation of the same bliss in each individual form is set as the goal before man. His body is seen as a veritable universe and he is called upon to find in himself the same Truth-principles which are at the head and govern the functioning of the Universe, the Divine Purusha and his Shakti who are the two eternal Terms of all Existence. Both of these, declare the Tantras, are there, veiled, in man; he is ignorant of their presence and misses the harmony and joy of their concerted action. To lift him out of this ignorance, to awaken him to this higher potentiality and lead him to discover, realise and participate in the inner harmonies of the mighty Powers governing his life-activity so as to progressively achieve the Delight of the Individual, the Jivananda, is the object of the second step, the Yoga Pada.

The Knowledge propounded by the Jnana Pada, the solution of the problem of existence as presented by the Sastra, is to be worked out in the life of each individual. Otherwise, Knowledge remains a mere learning. The Tantras have developed an inner discipline, Yoga, to enable everyone who undertakes to follow it, realise the truth of their philosophy in his own being. This Yoga, it must be noted, is not an invention of the Tantriks. There have been in India, since the days of the Vedic Mysteries, many lines of inner discipline to achieve union between the individual soul and the Divine, *yoga*. Different teachers developed different applications of it and the Tantric Yoga is a special elaboration based upon certain psycho-physical truths which have always formed the kernel of all forms of Yoga in India. No text gives the sadhana in full, for it cannot. The crucial part, the *life* of the sadhana in fact, is communicated in person, in secret, by the Teacher to the disciple; yet the general framework is sketched out sufficiently enough to provide a working guidance.

The Sadhana of the Tantra is not an inner discipline alone; it has a closely related external practice as well, both of which together form a comprehensive manual touching every part of the life of man, as we shall see later on.

But the Problem is not of the individual only. His aim, his endeavour is a part, a segment—significant one though—of the larger issue facing the collectivity of which he is a member. Man does not live all by himself. He lives amidst his fellow beings and whether he wills or not he is influenced by his environment much more than it is influenced by him. The Tantra Sastra recognises this fact and seeks to correlate their solutions in a way that is mutually enriching. It gives, so to say, a way of life, a religion to the society also so that both the individual and the aggregate can join and help each other in their common effort which is to seek and realise the Harmony and Joy of the Spirit in this terrestrial creation. And it is towards this end the institution of Community-worship, the Temple, the Yaga, the Kshetra, sacred spot of pilgrimage, are developed in the third step, Kriya Pada. The will and aspiration of an individual can best develop and flourish when it is buttressed by nourishment from an environment of like wills and aspirations. The collective thought and feeling also derive an impetus and gain a lead by a strong individual Force.

The Tantra keeps both these truths in view in developing its Kriya Pada. Ceremonial worship, specially on a collective scale, has a strong dynamic effect on the consciousness of its participants. It generates an atmosphere and releases vibrations in which the godward emotions of the heart, the truth-aspiring flowings of the mind gather movement and spread out in abundance and even the cells of the physical body throb in response to the Call of the Spirit. Furthermore, in developing this mode of worship and ritual the Sastra takes note of the fact that men in the mass need a more concrete, a more materially formulated presentation of the Truths of God and Religion than man as an individual does.[12]

And there is worship, ritual, for the individual as well. The last step, Charya Pada deals with the details of worship which are enjoined upon the seeker as an important part of his Sadhana. The Tantras develop the minutiae of the ritual with great care and load every gesture and act with a wealth of symbolism. This Pada not only lays down the mode of sadhana but gives also a code of conduct to the seeker and to the adept. The Sastra holds that no one law or rule could apply to all. For, men are of different natures; they are of varying temperaments, in several stages of growth and not all of equal competence. Hence no one uniform discipline could be laid upon all, especially when it is a matter of individual growth. As Sri Aurobindo writes: "Actually in life there are infinite differences between man and man; some are more inwardly evolved, others are less mature, many if not most are infant souls incapable of great steps and difficult efforts. Each needs to be dealt with according to his nature and his soul stature. But a general distinction can be drawn between three principal types varying in their openness to the spiritual appeal or to the religious influence or impulse. This distinction amounts to a gradation of three stages in the growing human consciousness. One crude, ill-formed, still outward, still vitally and physically minded can be led only by devices suited to its ignorance. Another, more developed and capable of a much stronger and deeper psycho-spiritual experience, offers a riper make of manhood gifted with a more conscious intelligence, a larger vital or aesthetic opening, a stronger ethical power of the nature. A third, the ripest and most developed of all, is ready for the spiritual heights, fit to receive or to climb towards the loftiest ultimate truth of God and of its own being and to tread the summits of divine experience." [13]

In the Tantras these are grouped under three broad categories ;

1) Those who are inert, dull and governed primarily by needs and impulsions of the physical nature—what we may call *tamasic*. Such a person is called *paśu* (animal man) who is bound (from the root *paś*, to bind) to the littlenesses of his nature. He corresponds, as Sir John Woodroffe points out, to the 'material man' of the Gnostics. The pashu, says Bhaskaracharya, looks always outward, *bahirmukha*, 'seeing the outside only of things and not inner realities'.

2) Those who by nature are restless, vigorous in vitality and impetuous in action—the *rājasic*. One of this order is the *vīra* (hero-man), corresponding to the 'psychical man' of the Gnostic classification.

3) Those who are by temperament refined, staid, led by a light of reason and generally of balanced

poise and outlook—of *sattwic* nature. A man of this type is known as the *deva* (divine man),—the 'spiritual man' of the Gnostics.

These are the Pashu, the Vira and the Deva of tantric classification; their temperaments, their ways of living are *paśubhāva*, the animal way, *vīrabhāva*, the heroic way, *divyabhāva*, the godly way. And the Sastra proceeds to lay down different orders of ritual, worship and even daily conduct for each of them. Thus what is permissible to the *paśu* is not expected from the *deva* nor what is enjoined upon the *vīra* permitted to the sadhakas of the other groups. This is the only distinction—practical and wise—that the Tantra makes between man and man, the distinction of competence, *adhikāra bheda*, which, by the way, is decided not by birth or status but by a close study of one's *samskāras* and the nature formed by them, by a Guru. And be it remembered, the Sastra envisages, even calls for, a progression of the sadhaka from *bhāva* to higher *bhāva* with a corresponding change in the mode of his sadhana. The Tantra thus shows rare wisdom in recognising the fact of the developing states of nature in evolution and providing means of discipline and codes of conduct to suit the different gradations of humanity.

III

THE KUNDALINI YOGA

THE Tantra Sastra has been aptly described as the practical Science of self-realisation. The aim of the Sadhana which is the main content of this Sastra is to awaken man to the true state of his being, free him from the bonds of ignorance, limitation and suffering to which he is normally subject and release him into a state of unfettered freedom and unalloyed bliss. The Truth around which the sadhana is built up is this: the entire universe is a joyful efflorescence of the dynamism of the Supreme Purusha and Shakti in their creative movement. The Intention is to repeat this joy of manifestation in each of the million forms which people this creation, to make each a living centre of the ebullient Ananda of the Divine Play. The same Divine Being and Power are there in man acting covertly. He misses the joy of their presence and the harmony of their rhythm because he is lost to himself, lost on the surfaces of his ignorant being. It is possible, says the Tantra, to become conscious and discover this divine creative power in oneself. The Shakti is lying apparently latent, asleep as it were, and its centres of action in the human system are only partially open and largely closed. So too the Divine Purusha, the Divine in its presiding poise, is veiled and waits for the Shakti to wake and work overtly before the consummation of their union in delight is effected. The

Tantra Sastra has developed a psycho-physical discipline to achieve this end. To quote Sri Aurobindo:

> "It has seized on the large universal truth that there are two poles of being whose essential unity is the secret of existence, Brahman and Shakti, Spirit and Nature, and that Nature is power of the spirit or rather is spirit as power. To raise nature in man into manifest power of spirit is its method and it is the whole nature that it gathers up for the spiritual conversion. It includes in its system of instrumentation the forceful Hathayogic process and especially the opening up of the nervous centres and the passage through them of the awakened Shakti on her way to her union with the Brahman, the subtler stress of the Rajayogic purification, meditation and concentration, the leverage of will-force, the motive power of devotion, the key of knowledge. But it does not stop short with an effective assembling of the different powers of these specific Yogas. In two directions it enlarges by its synthetic turn the province of the Yogic method. First, it lays its hand firmly on many of the main springs of human quality, desire, action and it subjects them to an intensive discipline with the soul's mastery of its motives as a first aim and their elevation to a diviner spiritual as its final utility. Again, it includes in its objects of Yoga not only liberation (Mukti), which is the one all-mastering pre-occupation of the specific systems, but a cosmic enjoyment (Bhukti) of the power of the Spirit, which the others may take incidentally on the way, in part, casually, but avoid making a motive or object."[14]

Following the ancient Vedic tradition the Tantra conceives of creation in terms of several planes of

Existence, from the Plane of Bliss at the summit to the Plane of Physical Matter below, each plane being a manifestation of its own psychological Principle. And this organisation planewise is reproduced in the human organism as well.[15] There are in the being of man certain nodii which are so to say centres connecting him with these universal planes of existence; and when properly tapped they open up in one's being their respective planes and the powers that are characteristic of the principles governing those planes. These are called Centres or *cakras* in the Indian Yogic system.[16]

These Chakras are also known as Lotuses with each a different number of petals. The different petals are the *nāḍis* or subtle nerve-channels[17] which surround and function through each of these centres. It is the number and configuration of these *nāḍis* that gives rise to the image of a lotus with a particular number of petals. And on each of the petals there is a letter, *varṇa*, representing the deity that manifests at that Centre. These letters, Varnas, are in all fifty in number forming together what are known as seed-letters, *bīja-akṣaras*, of all Mantra and Speech. Each of these *bīja-akṣaras* is the *svarūpa*, own form, of a particular manifestation of the Supreme Shakti; the sound which the letter represents is the sound-body of that Devata.

Now in the human body are found the following Chakras in an ascending order:

1) The Centre at the root of the spine called *Mūlādhāra* (Lotus of 4 petals). It presides over *pṛthvi*, matter in its gross physical state. Psychologically it governs our purely physical or sub-conscient movements and impulsions.

2) *Svādhiṣṭhāna* (Lotus of 6 petals) at the level of the genitals; presides over *apas*, the water-state of matter. Psychologically it governs the lower vital being, its desires and petty movements.

3) *Maṇipūra* (Lotus of 10 petals) at the level of the navel, presides over *agni*, the fire-state of matter. Psychologically it governs the larger vital, the expansive movements of the life-being.

4) *Anāhata* (Lotus of 12 petals) at the level of the heart; presides over *vāyu*, the air-state of matter. Psychologically it governs the emotional being.

5) *Viśuddha* (Lotus of 16 petals) at the throat level; presides over *ākāśa*, the etherial state of matter. Psychologically it governs the expressive and externalising mind.

6) *Ājñā* (Lotus of 2 petals) between the two eyebrows; presides over *manas*, the mind proper. It governs the mind in manifestation, its vision, its dynamic movement of Will-Knowledge.

7) And finally, the *Sahasrāra*, (Lotus of 1000 petals) at the crown of the head, 'the highest centre of manifestation of consciousness in the body'. It governs the higher reaches of our thinking mind, its illumined heights bordering on Intuition.[18]

" *Sahasrāra-padma* or thousand-petalled lotus of all colours—hangs with its head downward from the *brahmarandhra* above all the *cakra*. This is the region of the first cause (Brahma-loka), the cause of the six preceding causes. It is the great Sun both cosmically and individually, in whose effulgence Parama-Shiva and Adya-Shakti reside. The power is the *vācaka-śakti* or *saguṇabrahman*, holding potentially within itself, the gunas, powers, and planes. Parama Shiva is in the form of the Great Ether, the Supreme Spirit, the Sun of the darkness of ignorance. In each of the petals of the lotus are placed all the letters of the alphabet; and whatever there is in the lower *cakra* or in the universe (*brahmāṇḍa*) exists here in potential state (*avyaktabhāva*). Shaivas call this place Shiva-sthana, Vaishnavas Parama-Purusha, Shaktas Devi-sthana, the Sankhya sages Prakriti-Purusha-sthana. Others call it by other names, such as Har-hara-sthana, Shakti-sthana, Parama-Brahma, Paramahangsa, Parama-jyoti, Kula-sthana, and Parama-Shiva-Ākula. But whatever the name, all speak of the same". (Sir John Woodroffe) [19]

These various Chakras provide, as we have noted, not only an opening into the different planes of existence of which they are the doors as it were but they are also springs which release into action the several powers and energies that are centred in them. And it is at the lowest centre, the Muladhara, that lies coiled up like a serpent, that Divine Shakti, the Power which alone can manifest the Brahmananda under the world-conditions, the Kundalini Shakti. By Yoga, Tapas, by a strenuous discipline, inner and outer, the Kundalini should be awakened, uncoiled, and released into a movement of ascent from level to higher level of being, from Chakra to Chakra—each step of the ascent meaning an opening up of the Lotus of that Centre and a possession of its plane and powers by the awakened Shakti[20] till it rises to the crown of the head and there meets the Supreme Lord who awaits in the Thousand-petalled Lotus, the Sahasrara. With the achievement of this union between the Lord Purusha who presides and the Mother Shakti who effectuates and fulfils, there ensues the crowning realisation of the downpour of Bliss with which the entire being is inundated. The Kundalini then comes down the route, loaded with this Amrita, the wine of Delight, and lifts up each of the levels of the being to its highest possibilities of power and joy and in full course of time this ascent and descent of the Shakti in the human being delivers it into an ultimate joyful Liberation.

This in outline is the Kundalini Yoga of the Tantras.

To recapitulate in the words of Sri Aurobindo:

" It takes account of the psychical or mental body behind of which the physical is a sort of reproduction in gross form, and is able to discover thereby secrets of the physical body which do not appear to a purely physical enquiry. This mental or psychical body, which the soul keeps even after death, has also a subtle pranic force in it corresponding to its own subtle nature and substance,—for wherever there is life of any kind, there must be the pranic energy and a substance in which it can work,—and this force is directed through a system of numerous channels, called *nāḍi*,—the subtle nervous organisation of the psychic body, which are gathered up into six (or really seven) centres called technically lotuses or circles, *cakra*, and which rise in an ascending scale to the summit where there is the thousand-petalled lotus from which all the mental and vital energy flows. Each of these lotuses is the centre and the storing-house of its own particular system of psychological powers, energies and operations,—each system corresponding to a plane of our psychological existence,—and these flow out and return in the stream of the pranic energies as they course through the *nāḍis*.

" This arrangement of the psychic body is reproduced in the physical with the spinal column as a rod and the ganglionic centres as the chakras which rise up from the bottom of the column, where the lowest is attached to the brain and find their summit in the *brahmarandhra* at the top of the skull. These chakras or lotuses, however, are in physical man closed or only party open, with the consequence, that only such powers and only so much of them are active in him as are sufficient for his ordinary physical life, and so much mind and soul only is at play as well accord with its needs. This is the real reason, looked at from the mechanical point of view, why the embodied soul seems so dependent on the bodily and nervous life,—though the dependence is neither so complete nor so real as it seems. The whole energy of the soul is not at play in the physical body and life, the secret powers of mind are not awake in it, the bodily and nervous energies predominate. But all the while the supreme energy is there, asleep ; it is said to be coiled up and slumbering like a snake,—therefore it is called the *kuṇḍalinī śakti,*—in the lowest of the chakras, in the *mūlādhāra.* When. . . . . this Kundalini is struck and awakened, it uncoils itself and begins to rise upwards like a fiery serpent breaking open each lotus as it ascends until the Shakti meets the Purusha in the *brahmarandhra*, in a deep samadhi of union. " [21]

Read also :

" . . . . the awakening of the Kundalini Power. . . . is felt as a descending and an ascending current. There are two main nerve-channels for the currents, one on each side of the central channel in the spine. The descending current is the energy from the above coming down to touch the sleeping Power in the lowest nerve-centre at the bottom of the spine; the ascending current is the release of the energy going up from the awakened Kundalini. This movement as it proceeds opens up the six centres of the subtle nervous system and by the opening one escapes from the limitations of the surface consciousness bound to the gross body and great ranges of experiences proper to the subliminal self, mental, vital, subtle physical are shown to the sadhaka. When the Kundalini meets the higher Consciousness as it ascends through the summit of the head, there is an opening of the higher superconscient reaches above the normal mind. It is by ascending through these in our consciousness and receiving a descent of their energies that it is possible to reach the Supermind. This is the method of the Tantra." [22]

IV

SADHANA

WE have noted there are a number of schools of teaching among the Tantras; in each of these principal divisions there are again subdivisions with the result that there is an abundant variation in the precepts and their application. There are numerous texts—not all of them published—[23] each claiming to be the genuine scripture and propounding its own mode of practice and teaching. Common to all, however, is the prime importance given to the practical application of the Wisdom embodied in the Sastras—the *Sādhana*. The Tantra Sastra is indeed a Sadhana Sastra.

The Sadhana is as varied as the Truths it seeks to realise. Like the philosophy of the Tantras, it also is all-embracing. Further, it is not of one way of discipline. It takes into account the variations in human temperament and competence and modifies itself accordingly. The Discipline of the Tantra is an edifice: it is many-sided and many-tiered, with all the diversity of detail inevitable with the universality of its scope and the incidence of time and clime on its long line of tradition. Yet there are certain features which are fundamental to all the lines of this Sadhana.

Guru

In the first place there must be a Guru, Teacher. The Guru is one who has already realised, wholly or partly, an inner identity with the Deity who is the object of seeking in the Path; not only realised, but who has the capacity to impart the power of his realisation to the disciple. To such a one does the seeker deliver himself for initiation and guidance. The teacher studies the novice, his temperament and nature, the *samskāras* or predispositions in him, assesses his norm and capabilities before determining the particular line of Sadhana for which he is fitted. For in this Sadhana, as we have noted, the discipline is graded to suit the readiness of the Sadhaka. The seekers are broadly classified into three categories according as they are primarily governed by the tamasic or rajasic or sattvic nature—The Pashu, the Vira and the Deva (or Divya.) These divisions of *Mukhya Sādhakas* are further subdivided into *Guṇa Sādhakas* denoting their status and direction even within their class; there is the *Svabhāva Paśu* and the *Vibhāva Paśu*, he who though a Pashu initially has yet progressed towards the higher stage of Virahood; so too there are the *Svabhāva Vīra*, *Vibhāva Vīra* and *Mantrasiddha Vīra* and so on. The point is that even the course of sadhana varies with the development in the potentialities and competency of each and it is only the Guru who can know and instruct. He launches the disciple on the career of the sadhana for which he is best fitted; he initiates, he teaches by precept and by example, he takes the responsibility to guide him straight along the path. Here we may note the Tantra continues the tradition of the Veda where the Guru was looked upon as the indispensable Guide on the Journey to the Spirit:

> Ignorant of the terrain one asks of him who knows it;
> Instructed by the knowing guide he moves onward.

This, verily, is the happy good of Instruction:
He finds the Path that leads forward direct.[24]

To the disciple, the Guru is the embodiment of the Divine. He is the earthly representative of the Ishwara or Ishwari. The Grace and Power of God are channelled to the disciple through the person of the Guru.[25] It is he who awakens Knowledge in him, keeps the sadhana alive in him, and leads him on the track till fruition, Siddhi, is attained. In fact the Guru makes the *S'iṣya*, disciple, a veritable part of his own life and carries him in his protective arms on the Voyage. In certain traditions the Guru keeps the *S'iṣya* close to him for three days continuously, enveloped as it were in his own consciousness. This is the period during which the Guru is said to carry the disciple in his womb before he delivers the initiate as his son.

The modes of initiation are many. But in the Tantra it is usually done through the Mantra. The teacher transmits his own *Sādhana S'akti*, power of realisation, through the medium of a letter, word or words which he communicates to the disciple in secret. The Word of initiation carries and sows the seed of Sadhana in the being of the aspirant. He has then to tend and nourish its growth with vigilance and concentrated effort till the Shakti acquires a personality and even a body of its own. Thereafter he has to learn to deliver himself into the hands of this Power, the Shakti that is established in him and grows in the manner of his sincerity and application. For the Word, the Mantra uttered by the Teacher is no mere formula of human speech or prayer. It is the Voice of the *Jagad-Guru* that speaks through the Guru.[26] It is the Word of the Spirit. And that brings us to the next essential element in this Sadhana, the *Mantra*.

Mantra

It is an ancient perception of the Seers of this land that when Brahman manifests, the first form He assumes is that of Sound—*Nāda Brahman*. It is from this sound-dynamism, *nādaśakti*, that the subsequent creation issues forth, *vāgeva viśvā bhuvanāni jajñe*. This is the Logos, the Eternal Word in the highest ether celebrated in the hymns of the Veda, the *nityā vāk* of which human speech at its highest is a quaternary form. When the Rishi in the course of his *tapasyā* perceived a truth in his inner vision, he saw too its native sound-form in which it revealed itself on its own plane and he proceeded to render it in such human speech as would approximate to the original Word as closely as possible. And it is to such a rendering of perceived Idea or truth in its just inevitable word-body that the term Mantra is applied. The Mantra is thus the concrete symbol, the true sound vehicle of the truth perceived by the *seer*, *dṛṣṭā*, and hence it vibrates with the power and dynamism of the truth it embodies. The Mantra may be a letter or a combination of letters, a word or a sequence of words. In the Tantra Sastra each sound, *varṇa*, has been perceived to be the sound-form of a particular Deity or a principle relating to the *tattva*, truth of a Deity and is represented by a letter. So too certain combinations of letters or syllables are discovered to be the sound-forms of some Devatas. In their vision the seers saw also that these sound-symbols of Deities have their own characteristic hues. Each Mantra has an individuality of its own and to repeat and concentrate

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BANARAS

upon a Mantra is to incubate it into revealing the Truth or Power or Devata that dwells in its form. The supernormal Power so released could be utilised for spiritual as well as material ends.

Such is the Mantra, the Word which forms the vehicle of transmission of Power and Knowledge from the Guru to the Shishya. Be it noted, however, that on the human level and in the form of the human speech, the word or the Mantra may remain or pass as good as any other word without any special effect. It is no doubt instinct with a spiritual power of the Truth that ensouls it; it is also necessarily charged with the tapasya dynamism of the seer who first perceived it, held it in his being, gave it form and passed it on, full of his own soul-power, to posterity. Still it needs to be revivified and awakened before it can be dynamically effective. And this is done by the Guru. The Mantra is already living in the person of the Teacher; he enforces it with his own Shakti of realisation when he delivers this living Word to the disciple; not only that, he awakens the consciousness of the disciple to the life of the Mantra. Properly received and tended, this Mantra and the Shakti inherent in it takes shape in the individual as the Force that works out and accelerates the sadhana. As it spreads itself in the being of the sadhaka and gathers momentum, his human effort is swallowed and litfed up in its afflatus which throws up many a siddhi[27], wonder-powers incidental to its onward and upward movement to the Goal envisaged by the Guru.

To state succinctly the theory and use of the Creative Word by the seers of the Tantra we cannot do better than quote the words of Sri Kapali Sastry : " They start with the dictum that the word-sound has a power inherent in it, and that this power varies with the letter-sounds and a proper use of these word-sounds enables us to realise the truth in or behind the object it refers to. This theory of Tantriks is based upon their first axiom that the Word or sound-creation precedes the creation of objects—Word-sound, *śabda*, first and *artha*, the meaning or object next—*artha-sṛṣṭeh pūram śabda-sṛṣṭih*. This *śabda* takes the place of the *vāk* of the Vedic scriptures. It is the first *śabda*, called *nāda*, rhythmic sound, that was the first creation, the primordial throb, *ādya spanda*, that proceeds to effect the formation of the universe and create the objects of the World. It is the ancient Vedic theory of Creation, *Vāk*, the Voice of the Bull that roars, *vṛṣadho roraviti*, of the Supreme Truth, the Godhead that is translated into the language of the Tantra as the supreme and primal throb, the vibrant move of an infinitesimal portion of the Infinite absolute that measures out and forms and manifests all the worlds and this world and its objects. It is the same word, the sound, the rhythm, *nāda*, that is at work in the formations of tiny things as of colossal objects. The Tantriks discovered and promulgated a series of sound-symbols selected from articulate speech as representing the rhythms that constitute the formations not only of material objects, but of others which are subtle and are of the subtler planes of the Cosmos. Thus the original Word, the *Vāk*, the Voice of Creation which suggests the Eternal syllable of the Veda, OM—or rather AUM—develops in the course of its manifestation into the seed sounds of the Tantriks, *bīja-akṣaras*, which are charged with the principles of things; and in reality they have their own forms made of rhythms which stand behind the revelations and inspirations that greet the developed and higher faculties even as they compel and build the forms in well-ordered vibrations and move into great Cosmic measures.

The development of this seed-sound theory into very minute details by the Tantriks, with an eye to its utility in their explorations in the occult spheres, has had a far-reaching consequence on the practice of *mantra sādhana* for dealing with men and things, the elemental forces and beings of the supraphysical worlds. For the letters, singly and in conjunction with others, represent in their rhythms not only objects; they express the colours and other qualities, actions of different kinds including attraction and repulsion as well as creation and destruction. It must be borne in mind that there are two sides in the effectual process of these seed-sounds for their respective purpose. One is the radical and psychological aspect which carries with it the spirit and thought-vibrations natural to them and the other is the mechanical side that arouses the vibrations of the material that is generated in the effort to vocalise and deliver it for the execution of its natural function. This latter aspect can be easier appreciated if we remember what is a commonplace of modern Science—that the vibration of sound has the potency, the effectual power to create or destroy forms; but the other, the psychological and spiritual aspect of the sound-vibration requires a closer consideration, for it is not the sound of a drum or the voice of a brute but the vocal expression a self-conscious human being. And if we but go a little deeper behind the spoken word into the undelivered word which resides in the mind and consider its real character as related to the desires, passions, sensations and emotions on one side and the thoughts and ideas that belong to the higher mind or the mind proper on the other side, we discover that daily and hourly we produce by the word-sound within us thought-forms and thought-vibrations which result in corresponding vital and physical vibrations, act upon ourselves and others ending in the indirect creation of action and of formation in the physical world. When we learn to appreciate the relation of sound to speech, and also the action of thought-vibrations which are also sound in subtle state that incessantly emanate from us, act and react on others and ourselves in the manner stated above, we would find it easier to understand intelligently the power of the seed-sounds, *bījākṣaras* which represent as approximately as possible in terms of human speech-sound the natural sound-vibrations and orderly rhythms that have built the forms and bodies of the created objects as well as of creative forces to which they apply because of being their natural names in their causal state. The Tantras have discovered their utility in the occult lines of thought by fixing the seed-sound chosen for a particular object in some locus or centre in the nervous system and concentrating on it in a stream of uninterrupted flow of the same, i.e. similar vibrations that lead to the realisation of the true meaning in its causal state, or its position and purpose in the scheme of the Cosmic order. Or when this method involves a strenuous yogic effort too much for an ordinary seeker of occult truths, there is another comparatively easier, but none the less effective method that is generally recommended. It is the repetition backed by attention and interest, of the letter or letters to produce the subtle vibrations on the consciousness and thus to prepare it to receive the truth of truths beyond the mind which are evoked by the harmonic rhythms of the letter-sound held in mind through repetition and which are the nearest approaches to the natural rhythms of those truths."[28]

We said that each Mantra relates to the particular Power or Devata that has revealed itself in that sound-form. Who are the Devatas or Deities and what is their relation to the Supreme Divine on the one hand and the aspiring human soul on the other?

Devatā

The Universe is not a unitary system but hierarchic. It is a multiplaned creation, each plane being a manifestation of its own distinctive principle of Existence. Each plane has its world or worlds with its characteristic powers and beings participating in the organisation proper to that level of Consciousness. Governing and shaping all these planes and worlds in Creation are Powers, special Personalities and Emanations put out by the Supreme Being as cosmic functionaries to control, direct and further the movement of manifestation that has proceeded out of His infinite Being. These are the Great Gods and Goddesses that are celebrated in the religious and occult traditions under different names in the different ages.[29] From these original Gods (and Goddesses) too there have emanated a number of subsidiary powers, Shaktis and Vibhutis to participate in the activity of the Cosmos. A number of Beings and Powers in the worlds that constitute the gradations above our physical world are of this character. They derive from the Higher Godheads and are there to help the outflowering of the Divine manifestation, each with his or her specific charge. They are the numerous *Devatās*, Beings of Light, that are mentioned and worshipped in the popular religions. There are also beings and powers who are of a different character—beings of darkness. Some of them are what may be fittingly called the fallen angels, i.e. beings originally deriving from the greater Gods but who by a deviation in movement from their original truth have forfeited their godhood and turned into powers of Untruth. Some again are strongly individualised disembodied spirits from the earth who have established themselves in these subtler regions. Whatever their character, the beings and powers share in the supernormal capacities and strengths proper to the planes of existence they inhabit and they too are popularly called 'devatas' though the seeing eye of the Tantric Seers perceived and made a distinction in their nature, viz. *ucca devatā* and *kṣudra devatā*, meaning deities of the higher order and those of the lower. Naturally, lower in the gradation of the worlds, nearer the physical universe it is the latter entities that preponderate; as the scale of existence mounts higher and nearer to the Light and Power of the Spirit, they dwindle and it is the Beings of Light, the real Devatas that are more in evidence.

Now, the Tantra Sastra records a specialised Knowledge of these Planes and Beings and their activities which are of an occult nature. It seeks to harness this knowledge for the elevation of man and fulfilment of his purpose in life. It has developed ways and means to commune with and to invoke the aid of these Gods and Goddesses, the Devatas who are specific Powers of the One Supreme God, Parameshwara or the Divine Shakti, Parameshwari. The means of communication is the Mantra. This, at any rate, is the intention and rationale of all genuine Tantra Sastra. Doubtless there has been a gross misuse of the knowledge developed by this sacred science. Spurious texts have sprung up which propound formulae or mantras for contacting the 'devatas' who are truly beings of the lower type in order to attain petty human ends. And these may and do include, activities of a malign kind—of the type mentioned at the outset of our study. The beings to whom such approach is made are only too willing to respond and oblige the supplicant if only to extend their own sphere of influence on earth. Their one aim is to oppose the spread of Light and Knowledge by whatever means and this they do, positively by promoting the reign of Falsehood and Ignorance and negatively, by obstructing all movement of the Right and the Truth. Often they cross the track of the Sadhaka on the Godward Path and seek to lure him away from his high destiny with their specious prizes. But the genuine seeker suffers himself not to be diverted from his purpose by the *kṣudra devatās*. Whatever the distractions, whatever the oppositions, open or disguised, of these malevolent beings, if there is a central sincerity of purpose, fidelity to the instruction of the Guru and an unshakable faith in the Grace of the Divine, then there can be no lasting impediment to the seeker of Truth and lover of Light.

There are however, we must not fail to note, a number of Powers and Beings, Devatas, of a benevolent kind. They derive from the greater emanations of the Divine Light and Consciousness and seek to extend the reign of the Higher Truths in creation. They lend a helping hand to the aspirant in his growth towards the

Truth of the Divine Spirit, help not only spiritually but if so moved, materially as well. For material opulence does not run counter to spiritual advancement; in fact, and in a larger sense, material well-being and completeness forms an essential part of the total spiritual Siddhi of the kind contemplated in the Tantra Sadhana. The Devatas help and they lead the aspirant from truth to greater truth, from knowledge to fuller knowledge, from joy to vaster joy and ultimately—if that be the demand of the aspirant—deliver him in the bosom of the Supreme Mother, the Adya Shakti, of whom they are so many Forms.

Such is the Devata, the Deity whom the sadhaka is called upon to adore and invoke. The final aim is indeed to achieve union with the highest manifestation of the Divine. But the Supreme Divinity can be realised or attained only by a consciousness which has been cultured and raised to an appropriate pitch of purity and self-transcendence. The Supreme, however, can be approached and entered into relation with, through these Powers and Personalities, the Devatas, who are more accessible to human effort and aspiration.

Each of the Devatas has its own characteristic form, hue and vehicle, *vāhana*, attendant retinue, *parivāra*, which are perceivable to the subtle vision of those whose inner eye has opened. The Seers of the Agamas have not only *seen* and experienced them in their consciousness, but also proceeded to render their perceptions into as close a material correspondence as possible on the physical level. These are the various Images and Figures in which the Devatas are worshipped in the Indian Religion.

These then are the three fundamentals of the Tantra Sadhana, the *Guru*, the *Mantra*, the *Devātā*. They are, declares the Tantra, really one, *guru-devatā-manūnām aikyam*. For the Guru is present in the Mantra which he enlivens and communicates; the Mantra is the body of the Devata. The Guru is the embodiment of the Deity that is invoked. The practicant is enjoined never to mistake their sacred character; he is warned:

> To hell he goes who mistakes the Guru for a human,
> Who takes the image for a piece of stone,
> Who looks upon the Mantra as mere letters.[30]

V

UPASANA

TO suit the different temperaments and varying degrees of readiness of the seekers, the Agamas lay down different modes of *Upāsana* (lit. waiting upon)—adoration, contemplation and invocation of the Devata. These temperaments or *bhāvas* have been classified under four categories for this purpose :

First, there is the *brahmabhāva*, the temperament which qualifies one for an utterly silent, one-pointed dwelling of consciousness on the Supreme Divine as one's own self, on Brahman as the All—Brahmasadhana. Next is the *pūjābhāva* running into three subsidiary bhavas : *dhyānabhāva* wherein the devotee dwells mentally on the Devata, on its form and hue as laid down in the special Mantras called *Dhyānas;* the bhava which is expressed by *japa* (repetition) and *stava* (praise) and then lastly the bhava which needs to resort for its expression to *bāhya pūjā*, external worship in which a concrete form or image is chosen as the object or centre of worship representing the Deity.

For one of the *brahmabhāva*, there is no worship ; for to him there is nothing to worship. He the *jīvātma* and the Lord *Paramātmā* are realised or are being realised as one. It is for those who are yet in the consciousness of duality of He and I that the Puja, worship, is prescribed. Worship can be mental worship, *mānasi pūjā* or outward physical worship, *bāhya pūjā* or a combination of both.

The Agamas prescribe certain objects of worship symbolising in form the Deities or representing their dwelling-places, as perceived in the occult vision of their Seers. These are of three kinds:

1) Image, *mūrti*, which represents the Deity in human form with limbs and the like;

2) Emblems which stand for particular Deities, e.g. *sāligrāma* stone for Vishnu, *linga* for Shiva, etc.

3) Diagrams, geometrical figures consisting of lines and curves, circles, squares. and triangles all of which are symbolic, called *Yantras* or *Maṇḍalas*. The Yantra literally means an instrument, the means by which worship is done. It is, in the Tantric tradition, looked upon as the body of the Mantra which itself is ensouled by the Devata.[31] The Yantra is drawn or engraved on metal or stone or on any surface. Mandala is a figure drawn on a surface and may represent any Devata whereas the Yantra stands for a particular Devata alone.

These are the figures, *pratimā*, symbols or representations of the Divinity which the Upasaka places before him, *pratīka*, for adoration and worship.

Prāṇa-pratiṣṭhā

It is to be noted that the Image or Diagram does not by itself become a fit object of worship. It remains but a material form until it is infused with a life-principle. The worshipper contemplates in his inner being the form of the Deity as induced by the physical form before him, dwells upon it with an intense concentration and devotion; a spiritual force is generated in result and he transmits this power, released in his consciousness, to the object which then becomes *alive* with the spiritual energism. This is called the *prāṇa pratiṣṭhā*, Installation of Life-Force,—a unique contribution of the Tantra Sastra to the Indian spiritual heritage.

In places of public worship this *pratiṣṭhā* is done by adepts of standing and they then become living centres of the Higher Force, their precise character depending upon the nature of the Dynamism so activised. It continues to be so, as Sri Aurobindo observes, long after the person who established the Presence or Power has left his body; how long it will continue is another question depending upon the faith and ardour of the person in immediate charge of the Sanctum and the contributive faith of the devotees. That, however, is by the way. In the case of individual worship the *pratiṣṭhā* is done at each time of worship, with the help of the Guru in the beginning and by oneself in due course; at the end of the sitting there is what is called the *visarjana* by which the power or presence is withdrawn.

Upacāra

To such a living form of the Deity is the worship offered. Traditionally this worship has sixteen limbs, *upacāras*, (corresponding to the sixteen secular rituals) in which not only the mind and heart but the whole body of the sadhaka participates. In the Rajasic Puja the Upacharas are five; but to that we will turn later on. The usual sixteen *upacāras* are:

(1) *Āsana* (seating of the image), (2) *Svāgata* (welcome of the Devata), (3) *Pādya* (water to cleanse the

feet), (4) *Arghya* (offerings), (5) *Ācamana* (water for sipping and cleaning the lips), (6) *Ācamana* (offered again, (7) *Madhuparka* (honey, ghee, milk and curds), (8) *Snāna* (water to bathe the Deity), (9) *Vāsana* (garment), (10) *Ābharana* (ornaments), (11) *Gandha* (sandal paste or perfume), (12) *Puṣpa* (flowers), (13) *Dhūpa* (incense), (14) *Dipa* (light), (15) *Naivedya* (food for consecration) and (16) *Vandana* (prayerful homage).[32]

Each part of one's self joins in the act of consecration and worship of the Divine and thus the whole being of man is carried in the surge of devotion and surrender. Details vary from place to place, from tradition to tradition (*sampradāya*); modes of ritual and ceremonies differ according to the class to which the worshipper belongs—whether he is a Pashu, a Vira or Deva etc. Yet, are there certain features which are common to all the kinds of Ritual.

Āsana

In the first place the sadhaka has to seat himself in a posture which is most convenient, physically, and helps the body to acquire a sustained poise—*Āsana*. *Padmāsana* is the one usually adopted[33] as it secures a settled fixity to the erect position of the body—specially of the spine—a position which is particularly favourable to the coursings of the subtle nerve-currents and the movement of the Force acting in the body during the sadhana.

Japa

He recites the Mantra into which he has been initiated, i.e. he does Japa which consists in uttering the same Mantra a number of times in the specified manner *vidhānena mantroccāraṇam.* The Japa is of three kinds: first, the most common, in which the Mantra is uttered audibly, *vācika japa*; second, where only the lips (and tongue) move but no sound is heard, *upāmśu japa*; and third, where there is no movement of either lips or vocal chords, but the repetition is done in the mind, *mānasa japa.* The Mantra may be a *ṛk*, a verse, a word or combination of words, a letter or a series of letters, or the Name of the Lord. Whatever it is, the Mantra is repeated in a concentrated manner again and again; after a time it is a common experience among Mantra-sadhakas that, when properly done, the Mantra *repeats itself*; it is carried on automatically in the inner being of the sadhaka and he has only to listen attentively to it. Every time a Mantra is repeated, the sound vibrations that are put forth gather force and prepare on the subtler levels of the being the necessary atmosphere for the manifestation of the Truth or the Devata of which it is the sound body. Naturally, it goes without saying that a mechanical repetition is no Japa at all. For a true effective Japa to be possible, the entire being of the sadhaka must be collected and utterance must be a concentrated expression of all the aspiration and faith one is capable of. Only so can the call reach the Invoked and prepare for the response.

Mudrā

It is not enough that there be devotion and an attitude of surrender to the Deity within oneself, in the heart and the mind. It is a significant part of worship to express it bodily also; for the body too is a participant in the sadhana. For this purpose there are a number of gestures by movement of the limbs of the body, *mudrās* as they are termed.[34] These external movements of the physical body, with hands and fingers, emphasise and affirm the intention in the heart and mind of the worshipper and by constant repetition establish the idea in the very physical matter of the body. The Mudras are the language in which the body speaks to the Deity.

Bhūta-śuddhi

There is one more feature distinctive to this Sadhana and of great practical importance in the realisation of the Ideal. It is an indispensable discipline prior to all rituals; *devārca-yogyatāprāptyai bhūtaśuddhim samācaret* [35]. It is called Bhuta Shuddhi—purification of the elements. The body consists of five elements, *bhūtas* : Earth, *pṛthwi*, Water, *āp*, Fire, *tejas*, Air, *vāyu*, Ether, *ākāśa* with their formative and functional stations in the different centres of the body.[36] The Sadhana aims at a progressive refinement and subtilisation of these different layers in the being of man by pressuring the consciousness of each level of being governed by its particular element, into the mode of the next higher level so that ultimately the whole of his system is delivered into the direct workings of the Spirit on the highest manifested level of existence. To quote from the profound writings of Sri Kapali Sastry on the subject :

" Bhuta-Shuddhi is the most important and even indispensable (preliminary) discipline both for the outer worship as well as for the *mantra-sādhana* which leads to the inner life. The literal meaning of the term is the 'purification of the elements'; but its effect is to cleanse the atmosphere in and around the person of the worshipper and clear it of the influences of the elemental forces or beings to which men in their ordinary lives are subject; and the weaknesses on the mental or moral plane that pertain to the material body of man are indeed the result of the play of these forces of universal nature. The loosening and ultimate riddance of the tamasic forces of the dense and elemental nature is indeed the *sine qua non* for qualifying oneself for the *mantra-sādhana* that aims high at contacting the deity in the deeper layers of one's consciousness or on the higher levels of one's being that are supraphysical. But it is also necessary and to some extent possible in the case of a beginner preparing for the external worship, *bāhya-pūjā*. For without the *bhūta-śuddhi*, the *prāṇa partiṣṭhā* could not be done, since the latter is meant to evoke the presence or power of the deity from the spirit of one's own being which itself is lodged in and is a portion of the supreme Self, *parama ātman*, the indwelling Godhead in all creatures. In fact, the Tantric works everywhere reiterate the value and necessity of this purification without which the *partiṣṭhā*, the installing of the power and presence whether within oneself in the inner worship or instilling the spirit and power into the image or symbol in the outer worship is not possible. The outer worship, as is done commonly by the generality of devotees will be ineffective without the essential *pratiṣṭhā* on which everything else depends....

Its (*bhūta-śuddhi*) basic importance in the *mantra-sādhana* cannot be too much emphasised sincce in the yogic path of the Tantric it affords the foundation on which the whole edifice of Yoga is raised, with devotion, knowledge and will as its constituent elements. But even before entering straight into the inner apartments of Yoga where the psychophysical centres are concentrated upon and opened for progress in the Sadhana and building the inner life, the Tantric beginner devoted to his chosen deity is advised to effect the *bhūta-śuddhi* without which the presence of the deity, even when it comes in response to an ardent call of the *upāsaka*, worshipper, or a fervent emotional appeal to the deity could not be properly received or even when received be adequately held and effectively retained in the vessel, the body. Hence its importance and its value are recognised for any form of serious worship. It must be noted here that the purification of the various limbs, outer physical and inner mind-stuff aims not only at the eradication of the narrowing and obscuring influences of the elemental forces and the universal weaknesses of the lower Nature, but inviting in their place the opposite good influences of the benign forces, the powers of the supra-physical worlds. That is why in the actual *bhūta-śuddhi* every part is offered to a deity, and the group of deities that are invoked to occupy their places in the body-vessel, *ādhāra*, constitutes indeed the minor gods who are the *parivāras* of the chosen Chief, *pradhāna*. In some Tantric works, instead of the minor gods and the Chief Deity, the *tattvas* or cosmic principles with the soul, and the Supreme Self for the Chief Deity are mentioned in the culmination of the *bhūta-śuddhi*. And this is to give a pure spiritual turn with a philosophic basis to the *upāsana*. . . . At least one well-known authority like the *Meru Tantra* may be mentioned here in this context. Here is an English rendering :

'When the body in its entirety becomes fit to commune with the Devata, one must restore and fix in their proper place the principles, *tattvas*, hidden in the self. (For this purpose) from the heart-lotus one must bring out the soul from the Supreme Self. And according to the rule (method) by means of the Hamsa Mantra one has to look upon the body as a luminous form of light and as having become quite competent for the worship of the Deity.'

This is just one instance out of many to show that the conception of the Tantric in regard to the body was so complete and ideal that all the *tattvas* (or the higher powers) are understood to be lodged in it and the supreme Godhead abides in the centre and depths of one's being, the heart-lotus. Nor is the purification of the body and preparing it for Divine worship achieved by sheer physical purity and strength to be decided by medical opinion and judged according to hygienic standards. For the purity of the kind in the body is to be accomplished in such a manner that the god or gods could discover in it their actual temple consecrated for their advent or manifestation. And indeed the body is the field of battle between the dark and the luminous forces in the Cosmos, engendering bad will and good will with their brood of feelings and ideas and their consequent subtle effect on the body, nerves and muscles, in the shape of ill-health and good health and general disharmony running riot in the system. Thus the *bhūta-śuddhi* has a double function, the negative and the positive, the former paving the way by the clearance of the disagreeable forces for the positive side, i.e. the filling of the purified parts by the presence of the Powers that are invoked to occupy their right-places in the system." [37]

Nyāsa

It is an important part of this sadhana that one must learn to progressively identify oneself with the Divinity that is adored. He must open himself in his consciousness and let the Devata occupy his being more and more as steps to an ultimate realisation of complete identity with the Divine. During worship this aspiration and will is put into practice. He calls upon the Deity to occupy his being and he has the faith that in response to his prayer the Deity does enter into him. Each call to the Deity to occupy a particular part of his body with Its corresponding limb is accompanied by the placing, *nyāsa*, of his fingers or the right palm of the hand on that part to the accompaniment of the appropriate Mantra, with the certitude of faith that the divine part is settled there with that gesture. He repeats it limb by limb and finally spreads his fingers all over the body—*vyāpaka nyāsa*—to indicate and confirm that the Deity has spread over the whole of his being. It is only then his worship can be truly effective, answering to the high standard set up by the Sastra, *devo bhutva devam yajet*, become God to worship God.[38]

VI

THE SECRET RITUAL

HAVING stated the Philosophy and the Sadhana of the Tantra in its fundamentals, we would now proceed to consider the charge commonly brought against the rituals of the Tantra that they are really a cover, religious umbrella, for drink and debauchery. One is told that this is simply a cult for indulging in drink and sex without any of the moral or religious compunctions that inhibit the normal member of society.

Before examining the truth of these accusations, it is necessary to make it clear that the charges refer to what is known as the *Latā Sādhana*, the ritual of woman. Now this ritual is a part of the *Rahasya Pūjā*, secret worship, which is the mode of one line of worship among the Shaktas. We have seen that the Shakta school of Agamas branches into many lines and that the Shakta itself is only one of the five divisions of the Agamas in the Vedic tradition. (We have not included in our purview the Jaina and Bauddha Agamas.) Thus it will be noticed that the Secret Ritual is a practice of only one section of a division of the Tantras, and whatever the truth of the charges against this sub-species, it could hardly be generalised into a condemnation of the entire Sastra. And what after all is the truth of the whole matter? Is there really something immoral and unclean in the teaching of this Sadhana to justify the spate of abuse to which it has been subjected?

In the teaching of the Shakta Agamas, the entire creation is conceived as a manifestation of the Divine Consciousness-Force, the Ishwari, from out of the Being of the Lord, the Ishwara. All issues out of a *Brahmānanda*, a supreme Delight, of the Play of the Shakti with the Shaktiman and debouches into an outflow of the myriad forms and names for various enjoyments, *līlā*, of that Delight. This universe is a part of Her Play; She seeks the Joy of manifestation in each and every activity and form. Each individual is essentially a focus of her self-deploying Force for repeating her inalienable Delight of Becoming. As the highest being evolved by Nature in her creative labour, man has a special responsibility towards the fulfilment of this Intention of the Creatrix. He has to awaken to his true nature as an individualised centre, a channel of the supreme Shakti for the enjoyment, *bhoga*, of her own manifestation. No doubt one can be aware and function as such a channel only when one has developed a consciousness which is identified with the Consciousness that is the Shakti. Yet it is a state which can be, and is meant to be, attained by Sadhana in which self-consecration, self-surrender and devotion play a notable part. The individual learns to offer all of himself, all that he is and has and does, to the Divine Shakti through a sustained discipline, inner and outer. Not a thing is too big or too trivial to be offered to the Divine. All is Her creation and all is to be rendered back to Her in consecration. Each activity is an expression of the effort of the Shakti to reproduce her own Bliss here in the cosmos. Some of these succeed in bringing out that delight in however faint a manner and diminished in form. These, declares the Tantra, are best seized upon to effectuate the Intention of Joy of the Shakti. *Bhukti*, the Bliss of the finite world and *Mukti*, the Bliss of the transcendent Infinite are in essence the same Ananda of Brahman; to realise both and relate them overtly as well in his own person is the aim of the *śākta sādhaka*.

Food gives a certain satisfaction to the body; drink exhilarates the senses and gives rise to pleasurable sensations; sexual activity of coition gives an intense pleasure. These modes of happiness are to be taken up, and offered in their execution to the Divine Shakti in the solemn setting of consecrated worship. Be it noted that the sadhaka does not and is not meant to appropriate the joy in these activities to himself. Before he is competent to perform this ritual he must have learnt to become conscious of the Higher Shakti, within and without, purified and trained himself to be an unsullied channel for the joy of the *bhoga* to be transmitted to the Cosmic Enjoyer.

This in brief is the rationale of the Sadhana—the discipline of the Pentad, so called because of the five items of its Upachara, elements of ritual, viz. *madya*, wine, *māmsa*, meat, *matsya*, fish, *mudrā*, parched cereal and *maithuna*, union with woman; it is also called the Ritual of the Five M's, *Panca Makāras*, followed by votaries of what is known as the *Vāma Mārga*, path of 'left-hand' worship in contra-distinction to the adherents of the *Dakṣina Mārga*, the 'right-hand' worship from which these elements are rigorously excluded.[39]

All these five elements of worship during the performance of this ritual which is usually done in secret, individually or collectively in a Chakra (Circle) under the leadership of a Teacher. The ceremony is preceded by a long sequence of *pūjās* and *vratas* which prepare the participants to attain to the requisite state of consciousness and receptivity for the higher Shakti to be present. During the worship, it is the Shakti who is aspired to and endeavoured to be realised as the Sole —Shakti the worshipper, Shakti the object offered, and Shakti the receiver of the offering, the *rasa* of it.

In the ritual, the initiate is guided by the Guru at every step ; he is trained to energise and uplift his consciousness into a growing identity with the supreme Shakti whom he adores, and he feels and looks upon everything as a form of that Shakti. When he takes the draught of wine, for instance, he feels himself to be the divine Shakti, the wine itself a form of Her, *tārā dravamayi*, the 'Saviour Herself in the form of the liquid'. "Meditating on Kundalini as pervading his body to the tip of his tongue, thinking himself to be the Light which is also the Light of the wine he takes, he says,—'I am She', (*S'ā'ham*) 'I am Brahman', 'I Myself offer offering (*āhuti*) to the Self, *svāhā*. When therefore, the Vira eats, drinks or has sexual intercourse he does so not with the thought of himself as a separate individual satisfying his own peculiar limited wants, an animal filching as it were from nature the enjoyment he has, but thinking of himself in such enjoyment as Shiva, saying '*S'ivo'ham*', '*Bhairavo' ham.*" [40]

Thus it is Shakti that takes in, Shakti that is taken in, Shakti that enjoys the *bhoga—bhogo yogāyate*. And when the sadhaka enters into union with his woman, to the accompaniment of the resonant Mantras, it is done not as a means for the gratification of passions; it is conceived by both the partners as a veritable creative act of union between the Supreme Shiva and Shakti. Both have to raise themselves to their highest state of consciousness, forget their petty humanity and be nothing more, also nothing less, than embodiments of the Ishwara and Ishwari.[41] In this way is the whole of life sought to be transformed into an act of worship and a Yajna.

It must be recognised that sex in itself is no sin. It is enlightening to read Sri Aurobindo's remarks on the subject, though made in a different connection: "All recognition of the sex principle, as apart from the gross physical indulgence of the sex impulse, could not be excluded from a divine life upon earth; it is there in life, plays a large part and has to be dealt with, it cannot simply be ignored, merely suppressed or held down or put away out of sight. In the first place it is in one of its aspects a cosmic and even a divine principle: it takes the spiritual form of the Ishwara and the Shakti and without it there could be no world-creation or manifestation of the world-principle of Purusha and Prakriti which are both necessary for the creation, necessary too in their association and interchange for the play of its psychological working and in their manifestation as soul and Nature fundamental to the whole process of the Lila."[42]

It is important to note that the Tantra Sastra prescribes this ritual only for a select few. It lays down stringent conditions, obviously with a view to avoid misuse and abuse. Only he is adjudged to be competent for this *sādhana* who is not a slave of the palate and flesh, *jivhopasthapara*, not lustful, *kāmuka*, not shameless *nirlajja*.[43]

A sadhaka of the Pashu type is not fit to practise this ritual, it goes without saying. The individual of the Divya type, of the *sattvic bhāva*, is also not for it because his nature has progressed above farther than that for which this sadhana is meant. It is only a Vira, a sadhaka of the rajasic type who is of a dynamic and ebullient nature that is called upon to practise this sadhana which gives him a unique opportunity to fully work out the potencies of his nature and in the very process uplift himself by making a sacrament of the activities natural to his being. As it is put picturesquely : 'In classic tantric realisation victory was achieved by way of the passions themselves; they were challenged, directly faced and ridden as a mettlesome stallion by a knight.' [44]

We said that this secret ritual of the Rajasic Puja is prescribed only for the Vira sadhaka. That too as long as he remains in that station. As he moves away from that level to the heights of the *devahood*, as a result of the growth in his consciousness, he ceases to partake of it. For the others, the Pashu and the Divya, the Five Upacharas have quite another significance. These are to be understood in a threefold way: the substitutional, *anukalpa-tattva*; the literal, *pratyakṣa-tattva*; and the esoteric or symbolic, *divya-tattva*. Different texts explain the terms differently. To take one illustration :

Madya — Wine (literal)
Cocoanut water (substitutional)
Intoxicating knowledge of God attained by Yoga, by which one becomes senseless of the outer world (symbolic)

Māmsa — Meat (literal)
Garlic, ginger, salt, seasamum, wheat, beans (substitutional)
Consignment of all things to *mām*, Me (symbolic)

Matsya — Fish (literal)
Red radish, brinjal, etc. (substitutional)
Sense of mine-ness, *mat-sya*, identification with *oneself* as a result of which pleasure and pain in the universe are shared (symbolic)

Mudrā — Parched Cereal (literal)
Rice, paddy etc. (substitutional)
Relinquishing association with evil (symbolic)

Maithuna— Union with woman (literal)
Offering of flowers with appropriate gesture of union (substitutional)
Union of Kundalini with the Shiva-Shakti in the *Sahasrārā* (symbolic)

This in brief is the aim and the process of the Secret Ritual.[45] Doubtless its intention has not been always realised in its fullness by its votaries; its conditions have not been always genuinely fulfilled; and there has been a gross lamentable misuse by the ignorant and abuse by the pervert. But that has been the case with most high-purposive systems. The Sastra aimed to take man as he is, utilise his natural proclivities for his own advancement; that men have turned round and used the Sastra for their own degradation and the debasement of the high Teaching is one of the quirks of fate that chequer the march of human Progress. In the words of Sri Aurobindo:

> " Nevertheless, in its origin, Tantra was a great and puissant system founded upon ideas which were at least partially true. Even its twofold division into the right-hand and left hand paths, Dakshina Marga and Vama Marga, started from a certain profound perception. In the ancient symbolic sense of the words Dakshina and Vama, it was the distinction between the way of Knowledge and the way of Ananda,—Nature in man liberating itself by right discrimination in power and practice of its own energies, elements and potentialities and Nature in man liberating itself by joyous acceptance in power and practice of its own energies, elements and potentialities. But in both paths there was in the end an obscuration of principles, a deformation of symbols and a fall." [46]

VII

ESTIMATE

THESE, then, are the broad features of the Doctrine and the Practice of the Tantras. They are, as we have seen, a continuation of the Religion of the Vedas, albeit with certain inevitable changes. The Gods of the Veda, hold their own in the Agamas: their names may have changed but their functions continue to be the same.[17] Some of the central features of the external Vedic religion survive, like *Yajña* in the form of *Yāga*. And what is more significant, the esoteric line of the Discipline of the ancient Mystics is carried on by the Tantras. They recognise that behind the exterior of the physical universe there are other planes of existence with their own organisation of consciousness, beings and forces; these exercise their influence and control on the physical plane. Cosmic Existence is a stair of levels or grades of consciousness beginning from *pṛthwī*, earth, and culminating in the heights of supreme Bliss, *ānanda*, at the summit. The Rishis of the Veda worked out in their mystic life ways and means wherewith to commune with these higher planes of consciousness and their presiding help in their Powers, the Gods, and seek their own ascension to the altitudes of the freedom of the Spirit. The Agamas took over these practices, developed and systematised them into a regular Science. Witness for instance the elaborateness with which they have perfected the science of the Mantra. They extended the scope of the yogic discipline of the earlier ages to cover more and more of the being of man so that not merely the soul and mind, but the heart, the will and the very life-dynamism could stand uplifted in the glory of the Spirit. And more.

In keeping with the spiritual positivism of the Vedas the Agamas insist on recognising the fundamental reality of the Universe as against the growing tendency of the Vedanta to relegate the universal phenomenon to an inferior order of Reality, if not to a total state of unreality as a formation of a Power of Illusion—Maya, which plays on the Being of the Transcendent Brahman, the Sole Reality. The Seers of the Tantra declared and built up their whole teaching on the central perception that this creation is a manifestation from out of the infinite Being of Brahman, the Reality, brought out and projected by the Consciousness-Force inherent in the Being. This Power which is the dynamis of the self-conscience of Brahman or rather that Consciousness as Power is called Maya, because it measures (*miyate anena iti māyā*), measures out of the Immeasurable. Thus Brahman is Real, the Maya Shakti is a real Force of the Real and the Universe it builds out of the Immensity of the Real is equally Real. The world, declares the Tantra, is divinely real and the individual living in it partakes of this Divine Reality, but is not aware of it due to the veil of Ignorance which covers his self. The Tantra Sastra propounds a manysided Science of Discipline for the dissolution of this veil and realisation of the true character of oneself and the universe as concrete manifestations of the One Divine Reality. The Way they teach to attain to this reality of the Self is through an integral embrace of the body of this Reality, the Universe, and not by fleeing from the touch of its Body.

Further, this practical discipline is worked out with an eye to the practical exigencies of life. It is a graded Sadhana to suit the varying stages in the spiritual evolution of humanity and is catholic in its scope—perhaps too catholic not to have failed in maintaining its purity for long. The Gates of God are opened not only to the elect who form the cream of the sattvic order of evolution but to all of whatever stage, provided there is the requisite capacity and sincerity of aspiration, the *adhikāra*, in whatever centre of the being.

True, parts of this high Science of life that is the Tantra, have been put to uses far from the intention of its seers. Notably, the abuse of the body of occult knowledge, to draw and canalise the forces of the supra-physical planes, for malevolent purposes instead of for the material and spiritual advancement of man; and the vulgarisation of the profound rationale of the Mystic Ritual,—one of the most daring experiments conceived by man to ride to the heights of the Spirit on the crest of Nature in her ebullience,—are deplorable deformations. But in no way do they detract from the inherent soundness of the system, its comprehensiveness, its commonsense, its pragmatism.[48]

By and large it is the contribution of the Agamas that has played a substantial part in keeping the balance and having prevented the spiritual impulse of the country from running completely into the sands of Illusionism. It is the central truths of the Tantra thought and ritual that form the backbone of the Hindu religion today. The Gods of the Hindu Pantheon derive from and still retain their Tantra origin. The rituals, especially of the collective nature, are pronouncedly tantric in character. Even in the lines of individual Sadhana there enters a good deal of the Wisdom of the mystics of the Tantras. The Doctrine of Consciousness-Force, the Mahashakti as the all-consummating Power lifting up the puny human effort into the realm of realisation is a cardinal principle around which the Sadhana of the present age is centred in one form or other.

Thus far for the heritage of the Tantras and its part in the religious and spiritual tradition of India. We may ask ourselves if it has a part to play in the future Religion of the Spirit that is dawning on our humanity from its approaching horizons. Assuredly it has. We envisage the coming Religion as a Way of life in which the main truths of all the great lines of the spiritual effort of man shall enter and be synthesised in their just proportion around a central Divine Truth, a Principle of Knowledge-Power which holds the key to the harmonisation of the body and the soul and the efflorescence of the Supreme Spirit in the Robe of Matter. In such a Synthesis the fundamentals of the Tantra,—its grand aim to unveil the Divine Manifestation here in the material world, the significance with which it invests the individual as a living centre for the effectuation of this Purpose, and its evocation of the Parent-Power, the Adya Shakti, for the realisation of its Ideal—these have a secure place.

PART TWO

SHAKTA SADHANA

FEW systems have been so much subject to misunderstanding and confusion of thought as the Indian Tantra Sastra. To the average modern mind the Tantra is almost a synonym for low occultism, black magic and unrestrained indulgence of the body. In truth, however, it is none of these which are but fungus growths that have accumulated in the course of centuries and deface and cover the splendid form of the grand psycho-spiritual synthesis that is Tantra Sastra. The painstaking labours of certain scholars of integrity like Sir John Woodroffe have, indeed, done much to dispel the fog of prejudice and render clear thinking possible on the subject, and the publications of Ganesh & Co. on the Tantra are always to be welcomed for their signal service in putting the matter in the right focus. The *Hymn to Kāli* is an important work in their collection; for, apart from the subject matter which has an importance of its own, the Preface by Sir John and Introduction by Vimalanandaswami deal pointedly with the popular wrong notions of Tantric Sadhana and go a long way in restoring the proper perspective.

Also known as *Karpūrādi stotra* because of the word *karpūra* with which the first verse opens, this hymn of 22 verses addressed to Kali is attributed to Mahakala himself. The chief feature of this work is that it gives the *mantroddhāra* of the Dakshina Kalika. " It not only gives the Dhyana, Yantra, Sadhana and Swarupa Varnana of the Mahadevi, but it also contains the chief Mantras of Dakshina Kalika." The greatest of the Mantras of this Deity, the *Vidyarajni* of 22 syllables—giving the full symbol of her Swarupa—is contained in the first five slokas. The nature of Rahasya Puja, the special worship which is prohibited to the Pashu, animal-man, is indicated in the verses dealing with the Sadhana. This volume edited by Sir John Woodroffe (Arthur Avalon) contains, besides the text in Sanskrit followed by the annotation and lucid commentary of Vimalanandaswami giving the inner sense, an English translation of the text, extracts from the commentary and Notes by the Editor for the general reader.

Both Arthur Avalon and the commentator emphasise that whatever is said in laying down the *śākta sādhana* is not to be taken in the verbal sense. Apart from the ordinary meaning, over-shadowing it, there is another. "The Hymn has other than these gross (*sthūla*) meanings. In Brahmanism everything has three aspects—Supreme (*para*), Subtle (*śūkṣma*) and Gross (*sthūla*). The 19th sloka when referring to the sacrifice of various animals and of man himself intends according to the subtle sense the six great sins for which they stand, ranging from Lust (goat) to Pride (man). . (*Vide* Notes: Goat stands for lust, buffalo for anger, cat for greed, sheep for delusion, camel for envy and man for pride).

It is very instructive to know what the learned judge-scholar has to say about the much-maligned *Latāsādhana* of the Tantric worship: "But Parashakti again may mean no woman at all but Supreme Shakti or the Mother Herself whose forms they are and in such sense the union of the Sadhaka is with the 'woman' within himself—the Kundalini Shakti who in Yoga unites with Her Supreme Husband Paramashiva. The context must be known as in the misunderstood sayings *maithunena mahāyogī mama tūlyo na saṁśayaḥ*, which does not mean, as a recent English work on Hinduism suggests, that by sexual connection the Mahayogi becomes without doubt the equal of Shiva or God. This is on its face absurd and had it not been that such criticism is clouded with prejudice the absurdity would be recognised. How can sexual connection make any one God or His equal? The person spoken of is a Mahayogi, who, as such, has no connection, physical or otherwise with women. *Maithuna* means 'action and reaction' and 'coupling' and sexual intercourse is only *one form* of such coupling. Thus when Mantra is said, there is a coupling or *maithuna* of the lips. In Yoga there is a coupling of the active and changeless Principles of the Universe. The saying means that the Mahayogi who unites Kundali Shakti in his body with Paramashiva becomes himself Shiva.

"So again, it is said in an apparently alarming verse quoted by Tarkalamkara in his commentary on the *Mahānirvāṇa* :

> *Matṛ-yonau kṣipet lingam bhaginyaḥ stanamardanam*
> *Guror-mūrdhni padam dattvā punarjanma na vidyate.*

"This verse in its literal sense means that if any one commits incest with his mother and sister and places his foot on the head of his Guru, he is liberated and is never again reborn. But of course that is not the meaning. The first half of the line refers to the placing *jīvātma* in the triangle situated in the *mūlādhāra* centre with the *svayambhūlinga* in it which triangle is called *mātṛyoni*. The *linga* is the *jīvātmā*. From this point upwards, after union with Kundalini, the *jīvātmā* is to be led. The union of *jīvātmā* with Kundalini is spoken of in the second half of the first line. Kundalini is the sister of the *jīvātmā* both being in the same body. The meaning of the last line is as follows: After union of Kundalini and *jīvātmā* the united couple are led up to the *sahasrāra* or thousand-petalled lotus in the head which is situated above the twelve-petalled lotus which again is the abode of the Guru. When the Yogi is above the twelve-petalled lotus his feet may be described as being on the head of the Guru. Moreover it is said that at this point the relationship of Guru and disciple ceases. *Mātṛyoni* is also the term given to those sections of the fingers between the joints on which count of the Japa or recital of the mantra is *not* to be done. If *Mātṛyoni* suggests incest, then this verse is a prohibition of it—*mātṛyonim parityajya viharet sarva yoniṣū*. There are many other technical terms in Tantra Sastra which it is advisable to know before criticising it."

Another point to be noted is the gradations of *ācāra*, distinct kind of Tantric practice and ritual suited to the different types or orders of Sadhakas, *e.g. paśubhāva*, animal way, *vīrabhāva*, heroic way and *divyabhāva*, the godly way. The common man who has not transcended the bonds of desires and passions, the *paśu* as he is significantly called, is not entitled to the *ācāra* of the Pancha Tattwas. Only a hero, the Vira, who has acquired full control over himself has the right to let his senses also participate consciously in the movement of liberation into freedom and delight, each part of the being reaching, in a sense, its acme of fulfilment in the process.

But all this is done as part of worship. One can truly do so only when he has learnt to dissociate his consciousness from the physical body and identify it with the Higher Consciousness of the Deity who is worshipped so that it is truly the Deity who participates and takes the delight of the bhoga. What the commentator quotes from the *Kulārṇava Tantra* in this connection is worth noting: " Ananda is the Self (Rupa) of Brahman and that exists in the body. Wine is its revealer and is hence drunk by Yogis. Wine and flesh are taken with Brahmajnana for the satisfaction of all Devas, and whoever partakes of them for self-gratification is a sinner. "

The commentator, Vimalanandaswami, touches upon a variety of topics in his informative Introduction. He compares the Veda with the Tantra and avers that the Vedas are inferior; they move, he says, within the orbit of Ignorance whereas the Tantra goes beyond it. The Tantra gives a practical discipline to raise them (Sadhakas) to the divine state of Jivanmukti which the older tradition fails to do. While part of this criticism may be true with regard to the Karma Kanda or Ritual section of the Vedic lore, we are afraid it is totally inapplicable to the Veda as Book Knowledge, *S'ruti*. The Agamas, in fact, do not supersede but continue and develop the Vedic tradition of knowledge and yoga.

YOGA AND TANTRA ; THEIR PHILOSOPHY

AMIDST the maze of literature that is growing in bewildering abundance in the field of religion and spiritual life, it is quite a problem for the layman to distinguish the genuine from the spurious. The name of Ganesh & Co., however, is a sufficient guarantee of the sterling quality of their publications in the line. We have had occasion to review some of their outstanding publications on Tantra Sastra ; here are two more books —both running into the second edition—*The Occult Training of the Hindus* by Prof. Ernest Wood and *Kāmakalāvilāsa* by Arthur Avalon (Sir John Woodroffe).

Prof. Wood's book is a very helpful introduction to the science of Yoga in India for the western seeker. At the very commencement of the work, the author draws attention to the distinction between what is occult and what is simply abnormal. This needs to be pointed out to Indian readers as well in view of the unbelievable confusion that is so common in these matters even in learned circles. Religion, yoga, spirituality, spiritualism, occultism are all different terms signifying different things. Religion pertains to one's beliefs regarding God, the universe and oneself and the moral and ethical code based on them. Spirituality concerns the science of the self, the wisdom that helps man to find and realise the inner core of his being and thereby attain to the Divine Reality. Yoga is the practical discipline that forges the path to this end.

Spiritualism, on the other hand, is the science and technique of contacting and communing with the spirits in the subtler worlds, through mediums or various other means. It will be thus seen that it has nothing to do with the life of the spirit, the soul. Occultism is that knowledge or practice which relates to what is occult, not patent; for behind and above the world of men and things visible to the physical eye, there are vaster worlds and planes where different kinds of beings and forces live and move and act with repercussions on the earth-plane. Most of what is popularly known as occult knowledge touches only the periphery of this sphere, peopled by elemental beings and forces of the lowest order. Prof. Wood relates a number of interesting incidents with his personal experience which testify to the existence and use of such knowledge in India but warns the reader that this is not to be confused with *real* occult knowledge which is concerned with deeper truths of existence. "Such phenomena are not regarded in India as occultism, or really deep and hidden things, but as very superficial phenomena which the average Indian would not trouble to look at, and certainly would not think of cultivating.... Such cheap magic cannot give them what they really want—release from these restricted and painful conditions of existence.....". The seeker of the higher occult knowledge aims to learn how to grow out of the limited normal human consciousness, to liberate himself from the folds of ignorance and incapacity and enter into the wider regions of light and power. "Any efforts deliberately directed to this end may be called yoga. The term yoga means two things. The first is union with the divine life that pervades the world,—that is the goal of human life. The second meaning is an intelligently arranged curriculum of self-training, and practice directed to that end."

The author then proceeds to give an account of the several kinds of yoga that are in vogue in India. In a book of this kind, the treatment is naturally brief and only the broad outlines are given. Seven lines of Yoga are dealt with : " The Raja Yoga of Sri Patanjali, the Karma and Buddhi Yoga of Sri Krishna, the Jnana Yoga of Sri Shankaracharya, Hatha Yoga, Laya Yoga, Bhakti Yoga and Mantra Yoga." The author groups them under two general heads, the first three in *Raja Yoga* and the rest in *Hatha Yoga*, for the reason that " the last four proceed by external methods while the former proceed by methods working in consciousness itself." He anticipates, and rightly so, objections to this grouping. Such classifications, we may observe, depend on the standpoint from which one views the matter and each has its own truth. It may appear that the author's exposition deals more with the body of the disciplines than with their spirit. But the treatise is meant, obviously mainly for the western reader whose approach habitually lies through the familiar modes of systematization. It is happy to note, however, that there is throughout a recognition that the one constant aim of Yoga is to effect a change in the inner consciousness as a result of which there is "a great change in attitude towards oneself and the world. Right in the thick of life's activities our freedom must be realised, for to desire to slip away into some untroubled sphere would be to deny the possibility of our real freedom."

The second book before us is of a different nature. It is an important Tantric text translated and annotated upon by that famous western exponent of Indian Tantra Sastra, Sir John Woodroffe. This is a splendid edition containing the Sanskrit text of *Kāmakalāvilāsa* by Punyanandanatha, an adherent of *Hādimata*, with the simple and helpful commentary of Natananandanatha; it is accompanied by Sir John's English translation of the text, extracts from the commentary and his own Notes.

Put simply, the subject-matter of this work is the evolution or emanation of the world of forms and names from the One Original Being, propelled by a willed Desire to manifest, *kāma*. Whatever be the nature of the ultimate Reality in itself, when it is conceived as the Cause of creation, it is, as Sri R. Krishnaswami Aiyar points out in his admirably lucid Introduction, "clothed with a father-mother aspect, the static non-active principle being considered as the father and the dynamic active principle being considered as the mother..At the beginning of creation, God the ever changeless Being 'desired' to be an ever-changing seeming. The absolute Being took on the role of relative becoming. This desire and its fruition brought on the entire universe of name and form. The subject self conceived of itself as an object of its own cognition. The *I* became the *this*. This initial desire, impulse responsible for the creation of the world is given the name of Kama. The desireful supreme entity is known as Kameshwara and his active desire as Kameshwari. The entire universe is the outcome of the union of these two primary parents."

In the words of Sir John Woodroffe: "The *Kāmakalā* is the first display of activity in the Brahman Substance after Pralaya when the Devi holds absorbed in Herself all the thirty-six Tattvas of which the

Universe in all its variety is composed. She is then *Kavalīkṛta-niśśeṣatattva-grāma-svarupini*. She remains for some time in this state holding within Herself all the Tattvas until rest is disturbed by the desire or will (Kama) to create. The movement or stress of this Desire manifests as the *Kāmakalā*."

This devolution of the multiple universe from the Biune Reality is represented in the Tantra by the greatest of the Yantras—the Sri Yantra. The *Yantra*, as we know, is the form symbol of the Deity, *Devatā*, which it represents and whose presence it embodies, just as the Mantra is its sound symbol. "In this *Kāmakalā-Vilāsa*, the Devata dealt with is the highest conceivable one, namely, the Divine Mother Tripurasundari: Her Mantra is the Panchadasaksari and Her Yantra is Srichakra. The intimate relationship between the Devata, the Mantra and the Tantra is brought out in this book in several ways and the devotee is asked to identify himself with them as a necessary step towards the ultimate realisation." The Sadhaka is enjoined to realise his identity first with the Yantra and Mantra, then with the Deity—Tripurasundari, the "Mahashakti who is the creator and director of the universe and who ultimately withdraws creation within Herself."

The treatise, though short and consisting of only fifty-one verses, gives a succinct account of the blossoming of the *Kāmakalā*, the Supreme Consciousness in its first creative movement, traces systematically the manifestation of the many from the One, deals with the origin, significance and place in creation and in Sadhana of the Mantra, the Yantra or Chakra of the divine Lalita, Tripurasundari, the unfolding of the various Shaktis, *viz.*, Para, Pashyanti, Madhyama, Vaikhari, etc.

Appended to the work is a cryptic composition of Maheshanatha, the *Srīnātha Navaratna Mālika*, in which the author has "analysed our life-breaths in various ways and has pointed out their correspondence with the details of the Mantra and the Yantra."

Most of the contents of the book are necessarily of a somewhat technical nature and a full and proper understanding of them is possible only under the guidance of a competent Guru.

MAHANIRVANA TANTRA

WHEN one thinks of the early pioneers of Indian renaissance in the last century, a few names stand out for the decisive turn they gave to the movement of national awakening. Of these, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the founder of Brahma Samaj, is easily among the first. Many know of his services to social reform; much is said of his revolt from orthodox Hinduism. But little is known of his deep interest in matters spiritual, in the practical science of man's inner development which is the bedrock on which the superstructure called Hinduism is based. There is an interesting reference to this side of the Raja by Sir John Woodroffe in his book *The Great Liberation, Mahānirvāṇa Tantra.*

This important work of Tantra Sastra, Sir John records, was first brought into print under the auspices of the Adi Brahma Samaj in 1798. The text was accompanied by the commentary of Srimad Hariharananda Bharati, the guru of Raja Ram Mohan Roy. He writes: "The manuscript of the commentary.....is almost entirely in the Raja's handwriting. In the beginning of each chapter of the commentary the Raja writes, '*Om Namo Brahmaṇe*' and in the beginning of the commentary to the 9th chapter there is in addition to the above the following invocation: *Srī-Srī-nātha-padmambhoje niyatam matirastu me*' which shows that the Raja who willed that his mind should ever rest on the lotus feet of the holy guru maintained his faith in the continuance of the traditional spiritual heritage…."

"He was himself initiated by Hariharananda after *Purascaraṇa.* He never discarded his *upavita* which was found on his person when he died at Bristol in England."

Sir John scouts the view held by some that the *Mahānirvāṇa* was a fabrication in whole or in part of Hariharananda written to buttress the reformist views of himself and his disciple. He refers to an old manuscript of the Tantra which he came across with a Nepalese Pundit, which was of *Sakābda* 1,300 or about 500 years old and contained not merely the fourteen chapters comprising the first part so far published but further portions which are almost double the first. Unfortunately he could not secure the consent of the Pundit to publish the full manuscript because of the latter's fear that the *S'atkarma Mantras* might be put to evil use to harm others by the malevolent. In vain did Sir John plead that "the mere publication of the Mantras without knowledge of what is called *prayoga* (which cannot be learned of books) would in any case be ineffectual." He refers to this refusal regretfully, expressing, however, his admiration for "this true attitude of the higher Tantrika" which he pertinently points to as a sufficient answer to those critics to whom "the Tantra is nothing but black magic and all its followers black magicians."

This publication of the *Mahānirvāṇa Tantra* with the commentary of Hariharananda has been the basis of the number of editions that followed subsequently. Sir John Woodroffe brought out the first edition of his translation of this work in 1913 with a commentary of his own but based on that of Hariharananda. This was the first of the series of works that flowed from the pen of this versatile scholar-judge who stands out apart from the crowd of the superior Orientalists that descended on the Indian scene in the last century and brought about an enormous confusion of thought. He recognised the limitations of a foreigner in understanding the spiritual and religious literature and traditions of a country as old and singular as India, and placed himself under the guidance of competent Indian exponents. As he observes elsewhere: "It is necessary to study Hindu commentators and to seek the oral aid of those who possess the traditional interpretation of the Sastra. Without this and an understanding of what Hindu worship is and means, absurd mistakes are likely to be made.. As regards the Tantra, the great Sadhana Sastra, nothing which is both of an understanding and accurate character can be achieved without a study of the original texts undertaken with the assistance of the Tantrik Gurus and Pundits who are the authorised custodians of its tradition.

"The Tantras generally are written in comparatively simple Sanskrit. For their rendering, however, a working knowledge of their terminology and ritual is required, which can be only fully found in those to whom it is familiar through race, upbringing, and environments and in whom there is still some regard for their ancient inheritance." With this healthy attitude, it is not surprising that Sir John came to acquire an amazing spirit of identity with the breath of the Indian Tantra Sastra and succeeded in resuscitating and reclaiming the treasures of this great Sadhana-Sastra to an extent and in a manner that has not been given to any other single individual to achieve. Arthur Avalon—for that is the *nom-de-plume* under which all his translations appeared—has become a byword for authority on Tantra for modern students of this science.

The present edition—the third one—consists of the Sanskrit text in bold types with the commentary of Hariharananda Bharati and Sir John's English translation with his own commentary. For his first edition he had written an Introduction explaining the essentials of the Tantra Sastra in a simple manner in order to facilitate understanding of the main work. This introduction is now separately issued and helps the reader to acquire the right frame of mind to enter into the spirit of the Sastra. It gives the background to the *Mahānirvāṇa Tantra* and explains in modern terms the system that is propounded in the work and the phraseology employed therein. The system of the worlds, the individual and the universe, the four aims of being, the three temperaments, the various competencies of sadhakas, the mode of initiation, the *śiṣya* and the *guru*, the difference between the Vedic and the Tantric traditions, the different Ages and Yugas, are some of the subjects that have been expounded in the Tantric setting, with admirable lucidity. Much of the fog of misunderstanding with which the Sastra is obscured is effectively cleared by the author's penetrative explanations.

The *Mahānirvāṇa Tantra* is in the form of a dialogue on Mount Kailas between Lord Shiva and his Shakti, Goddess Parvati. It presents and elaborates a Doctrine of Life (and after-life) embracing every aspect of human existence, individual and collective. The destiny of the human race, the mode of liberation from ignorance, the worship of Brahman, the Mantra, Stotra, Ritual, Dharma, Sacraments, Expiatory acts, Castes and Ashramas, privileges and responsibilities of Avadhutas, Consecration and Installation of Deities, in short the whole gamut of problems and situations which every aspiring individual finds himself faced with, are here handled with a thoroughness that is characteristic of the Indian Sastras.

This sumptuous volume is indispensable for a correct evaluation and appreciation of the Tantra Sastra. Along with the *Introduction*, whose value far exceeds its slenderness in volume, it should be read by every earnest student of the subject.

NOTES

NOTES

1.

Kṛte śrutyukta ācārastretayām smṛtisambhavaḥ
dvāpare tu purāṇoktaḥ kalāvāgamasammatḥ (Kularnava Tantra)

2. *Further Lights : Veda and Tantra* (Pp. 155-56)

3. The following note (by Swami Prajnananda ?), approvingly cited by Sir John Woodroffe, would be found useful on the subject. Sir John it was, it will be always gratefully remembered, who made a deep study of the Tantras, pioneered and contributed more than any other single individual towards the resuscitation of the rightful glory of this ancient Sastra through his lectures, translations and writings under the *nom de plume*, Arthur Avalon. We will have frequent occasion to quote from his works in our present study.

" Hitherto all theories about the origin and the importance of the Tantra have been more or less prejudiced by a wrong bias against Tantrikism which some of its own later sinister developments were calculated to create. This bias had made almost every such theory read either like a condemnation or an apology. All investigations being thus disqualified, the true history of Tantrikism has not yet been written ; and we find cultured people mostly inclined either to the view that Tantrikism originally branched off from the Buddhistic Mahayana or Vajrayana as a cult of some corrupted and self-deluded monastics, or to the view that it was the inevitable dowry which some barbarous non-Aryan races brought along with them into the fold of Hinduism. According to both these views, however, the form which this Tantrikism—either a Buddhistic development or a barbarous importation—has subsequently assumed in the literature of Hinduism, is its improved edition as issuing from the crucibles of Vedic or Vedantic transformation. But this theory of the curious comingling of the Vedas and Vedanta with Buddhistic corruption or with non-Aryan barbarity is perfectly inadequate to explain the all-pervading influence which the Tantras exert on our present-day religious life. Here it is not any hesitating compromise that we have got before us to explain, but a bold organic synthesis, a legitimate restatement of the Vedic culture for the solution of new problems and new difficulties which the signalised dawn of a new age.

In tracing the evolution of Hinduism, modern historians take a blind leap from Vedic ritualism direct to Buddhism, as if to conclude that all those newly formed communities, with which India had been swarming all over since the close of the fateful era of the Kurukshetra war and to which was denied the right of Vedic sacrifices, the monopoly of the higher threefold castes of pure orthodox descent, were going all the time without any religious ministrations. These Aryanised communities, we must remember, were actually swamping the Vedic orthodoxy, which was already gradually dwindling down to a helpless minority in all its scattered centres of influence, and was just awaiting the final blow to be dealt by the rise of Buddhism. Thus the growth of these new communities and their occupation of the whole land constituted a mighty event that had been silently taking place in India on the outskirts of the daily shrinking orthodoxy of Vedic ritualism, long before Buddhism appeared on the field, and this momentous event our modern historians fail to take due notice of either, it may be because, of a curious blindness of self-complacency or because of the dazzle which the sudden triumph of Buddhism and the overwhelming mass of historical evidences left by it, create before their eyes. The traditional Kali Yuga dates from the rise of these communities and the Vedic religious culture of the preceding Yuga underwent a wonderful transformation along with a wonderful attempt it made to Aryanise these rising communities.

History, as hitherto understood and read, speaks of the Brahmins of the pre-Buddhistic age,—their growing alienation from the Jnana-Kanda or the Upanishadic wisdom, their impotency to save the orthodox Vedic communities from the encroachments of the non-Vedic hordes and races, their ever-deepening religious formalism and social exclusiveness. But this history is silent on the marvellous feats which the Upanishadic sects of anchorites were silently performing on the outskirts of the strictly Vedic community with the object of Aryanising the new India that was rising over the ashes of the Kurukshetra conflagration. This new India was not strictly Vedic like the India of the bygone ages, for it could not claim the religious ministrations of the orthodox Vedic Brahmins and could not, therefore, perform Yajnas like the latter. The question, therefore, is as to how this new India became gradually Aryanised, for Aryanisation is essentially a spiritual process, consisting in absorbing new communities of men into the fold of the Vedic religion. The Vedic ritualism that prevailed in those days was powerless, we have seen, to do anything for these new communities springing up all over the country. Therefore, we are obliged to turn to the only other factor in Vedic religion besides the Karma-Kanda for an explanation of those changes which the Vedic religion wrought in the rising communities in order to Aryanise them. The Upanishads represent the Jnana-Kanda of the Vedic religion and if we study all of them, we find that not only the earliest ritualism of Yajnas was philosophised upon in the earlier Upanishads, but the foundation for a new, and no less elaborate, ritualism was fully laid in many of the later Upanishads. For example, we study in these Upanishads how the philosophy of Pancha-Upasana (fivefold worship, viz., the worship of Shiva, Devi, Sun, Ganesh and Vishnu) was developed out of the mystery of the Pranava (OM). This philosophy cannot be dismissed as a post-Buddhistic interpolation, seeing that some features of the same philosophy can be clearly traced even in the Brahmanas (e.g., the discourse about the conception of Shiva.)

Here, therefore, in some of the later Upanishads we find recorded the attempts of the pre-Buddhistic recluses of the forest to elaborate a post-Vedic ritualism out of the doctrine of the Pranava and the Vedic theory of yogic practices. Here in these Upanishads we find how the Bija-mantras and the Shatchakra of the Tantras were being originally developed, for on the Pranava or Udgitha had been founded a special learning and a school of philosophy from the very earliest ages and some of the 'spinal' centres of Yogic meditation had been dwelt upon in the earliest Upanishads and corresponding Brahmanas. The Upakaranas of Tantrik worship, namely, such material adjuncts as grass, leaves, water and so on, were most apparently adopted from Vedic worship along with their appropriate incantations. So even from the Brahmanas and the Upanishads stands out in clear relief a system of spiritual discipline,—which we would unhesitatingly classify as Tantrik—having at its core the Pancha-Upasana and around it a fair round of rituals and rites consisting of Bija-mantras and Vedic incantations, proper meditative processes and proper manipulation of sacred adjuncts of worship adopted from the Vedic rites. This may be regarded as the earliest configuration which Tantrikism had on the eve of those silent but mighty social upheavals through which the Āryanisation of vast and increasing multitudes of new races proceeded in pre-Buddhistic India and which had their culmination in the eventful centuries of the Buddhistic *coup de grace*.

Now this pre-Buddhistic Tantrikism, perhaps, then recognised as the Vedic Pancha-Upasana, could not have contributed at all to the creation of a new India, had it remained confined completely within the limits of monastic sects. But like Jainism, this Pancha-Upasana went forth all over the country to bring ultra-Vedic communities under its spiritual ministrations. Even if we enquire carefully into the social conditions obtaining in the strictly Vedic ages, we find that there was always an extended wing of the Āryanised society where the purely Vedic Karma-Kanda could not be promulgated, but where the moulding influence of Vedic rituals worked through the development of suitable spiritual activities. It is always to the Jnanakanda and the monastic votaries thereof, that the Vedic religion owed its wonderful expansiveness and its progressive self-adaptability, and every religious development within the Vedic fold, but outside the ritualism of Homa sacrifices, is traceable to the spiritual wisdom of the all-renouncing forest recluses. . . .

The greatest problem of the pre-Buddhistic ages was the Āryanisation of the new India that rose and surged furiously from every side against the fast-dwindling centres of the old Vedic orthodoxy struggling hard, but in vain, by social enactments to guard its perilous insulation. But for those religious movements, such as those of the Bhagavatas, Shaktas, Sauryas, Shaivas, Ganapatyas and Jainas, that tackled this problem of Aryanisation most successfully, all that the Vedic orthodoxy stood for in the real sense would have gradually perished without trace. These movements, specially the five cults of Vedic worship, took up many of the non-Aryan races and cast their life in the mould of the Vedic spiritual ideal, minimizing in this way the gulf that existed between them and the Vedic orthodoxy and thereby rendering possible their gradual amalgamation. And where this task remained unfulfilled owing to the mould proving too narrow still to fit into the sort of life which some non-Aryan races or communities lived, there it remained for Buddhism to solve the problem of Āryanisation in due time. But still we must remember that by the time Buddhism made its appearance, the pre-Buddhistic phase of Tantra worship had already established itself in India so widely and so firmly that instead of dislodging it by its impetuous onset—all the force of which, by the by, was mainly spent on the tottering orthodoxy of Vedic ritualism—Buddhism was itself swallowed up within three or four centuries by its perhaps least suspected opponent of this Tantra worship and then wonderfully transformed and ejected on the arena as the Mahayana. (*S'akti and S'ākta* Pp. 115—118).

4. *Further Lights : Veda and Tantra* (Pp. 161)

5. There are two kinds of *S'ruti*, revealed knowledge, that of the Veda and that of the Tantra, *vaidikī tāntrikī caiva dvividhāśrutiḥ kīrtitā* (Kulluka Bhatta).

6. In these different classes of Agamas again, there are sub-divisions. For instance, among the followers of the Shaiva Agamas there is the Trika school current in Kashmir and the Shaiva Siddhanta in the southern parts of the country.

Among the Shaktas there are the three well-known divisions: (1) Kaula Agamas whose way is more of external worship, *bahirmukha*, with a stress on *artha* and *kāma*, material prosperity and enjoyment, (2) Mishra Agamas (so called because of the mixture, *miśra*, of action, *kriyā*, and special worship, *upāsanā*, in their methods) which aim at the fulfilment of Dharma, moral elevation of man, and lastly the (3) Samaya Agamas which develop a more inward, *antarmukha*, discipline to achieve the spiritual liberation of the worshipper.

It is computed that the number of the Vaishnava Agamas is 108 ; Shaiva 28 ; Shakta comprises 64 Kaula texts, 8 Mishra and 5 Samaya agamas. There will be always difference of opinion in these matters as the number of spurious 'agamas' claiming to be genuine sastras is legion.

7. The following remarks of Sir John Woodroffe in this connection will be found interesting :

" Many years ago Edward Sellon, with the aid of a learned Orientalist of the Madras Civil Service, attempted to learn its mysteries, but for reasons, which I need not here discuss, did not view them in the right standpoint. He, however, compared the Shaktas with the Greek Telestica or Dynamica, the Mysteries of Dionysus " Fire borne in the cave of initiation " with the Shakti Puja, the Shakti Shodhana with the purification shown in d'Hancarvilles' " Antique Greek Vases " ; and after referring to the frequent mention of this ritual in the writings of the Jews and other ancient authors, concluded that it was evident that we had still surviving in India in the Shakta worship a very ancient, if not the most ancient, form of Mysticism in the whole world. Whatever be the value to be given to any particular piece of evidence, he was right in his general conclusion. For, when we throw our minds back upon the history of this worship we see stretching away into the remote and fading past the figure of the Mighty Mother of Nature, most ancient among the ancients ; the Adya Shakti, the dusk Divinity, many breasted, crowned with towers, whose veil is never lifted, Isis, 'the one who is all that has been, is and will be,' Kali, Hathor, Cybele, the Cowmother Goddess Ida, Tripurasundari, the Ionic Mother, Tef the spouse of Shu by whom He effects the birth of all things, Aphrodite, Astarte in whose groves the Baalim were set, Babylonian Mylitta, Buddhist Tara, the Mexican Isha, Hellenic Osia, the consecrated, the free and pure, African Salambo who like Parvati roamed the Mountains, Roman Juno, Egyptian Bast the flaming Mistress of Life, of Thought, of Love, whose festival was celebrated with wanton joy, the Assyrian Mother Succoth Benoth, Northern Freia, Mulaprakriti, Semele, Maya, Ishtar, Saitic Neith Mother of the Gods, eternal deepest ground of all things, Kundali, Guhyamahabhairavi and all the rest.

And yet there are people who allege that the 'Tantric' cult is modern. To deny this is not to say that there has been or will be no change or development in it. As man changes, so do the forms of his beliefs. An ancient feature of this faith and one belonging to the ancient Mysteries is the distinction which it draws between the initiate whose Shakti is awake (*prabuddha*) and the Pashu the unillumined or 'animal' and, as the Gnostics called him, 'material' man. The Natural, which is the manifestation of the Mother of Nature, and the spiritual or the Mother as She is in and by Herself are one, but the initiate alone truly recognises this unity. He knows himself in all his natural functions as the one Consciousness whether in enjoyment (*bhukti*) or Liberation (*mukti*). It is an essential principle of Tantric Sadhana that man in general must rise through and by means of Nature, and not by an ascetic rejection of Her. A profoundly true principle is here involved whatever has been said of certain applications of it. When Orpheus transformed the old Bacchic cult, it was the purified who in the beautiful words of Euripides 'went dancing over the hills with the daughters of Iacchos'.. There are features in the ordinary outer worship which are very old and widespread, as are also other parts of the esoteric teaching. In this connection, a curious instance of the existence, beyond India, of Tantric doctrine and of practice is here given. The American Indian Maya Scripture of the Zunis called the Popul Vuh speaks of Hurakan or Lightning, that is (I am told) Kundalinishakti; of the 'air tube' or 'White-cord' or the Sushumna Nadi; of the 'twofold air tube' that is Ida and Pingala; and of various bodily centres which are marked by animal glyphs. (*S'akti* and *S'ākta*, Pp. 87-88)

8. (*Kulārṇava* II.85.140, 141)
Vedātmakam śāstram viddhi kaulātmakam....

9. *Viprādyantyajaparyantā dvipadā ye'tra bhūtale*
te sarvé smin kulācāre bhaveyuradhikāriṇaḥ.

All two-footed beings in the world, from Vipra to inferior classes, are competent for Kulachara. (*Mahanirvāṇa Tantra*, XIV. 184)

10. It is a common saying in Tantra literature that while other Sastras only speculate, the Ayurveda (medical science) and Tantra "are practical, self-evident and prove themselves at every step."

11. Some want duality, some non-duality; but my Truth is beyond both. (*Kulārṇava* 1.110)

12. *Vide* the relevant remarks of Sir John Woodroffe:

"The Tantras both in India and Tibet are the expression of principles which are of universal application. The mere statement of religious truths avails not.

What is necessary for all is a *practical method* of realisation. This too the occultist needs. Further the ordinary run of mankind can neither apprehend, nor do they derive satisfaction from mere metaphysical concepts. They accept them only when presented in personal form. They care not for Shunyata the Void, nor Sacchidananda in the sense of mere Consciousness-Being-Bliss. They appeal to personal Bodhisattwas, Buddhas, Shiva, Vishnu, Devi who will hear their prayer and grant them aid. Next they cannot stand by themselves. They need the counsel and guidance of the priest and Guru and the fortifying virtues of the sacraments. They need a definite picture of their object of worship, such as is detailed in the Dhyana of the Devatas, an image, a Yantra, a Mandala and so forth, a developed ritual and pictorial religion. This is not to say that they are wrong. These natural tendencies however become accentuated in course of time to a point where 'superstition', mechanical devotion and lifeless formalism and other abuses are produced. There then takes place what is called a 'Reform', in the direction of a more spiritual religion. This too is accentuated to the point of barrenness. Religion becomes sterile to produce practical result and ritual and pictorial religion recurs. So Buddhism, which in its origin has been represented to be a reaction against excessive and barren ritualism, could not rest with a mere statement of the noble truths and the eightfold path. Something practical was needed. The Mahayana (Thegpa Chhenpo) was produced. Nagarjuna in the second century A.D.(?) is said to have promulgated ideas to be found in the Tantras. In order to realise the desired end, use was made of all the powers of man, physical and mental. Theistic notions as also Yoga came again to the fore in the Yoga-Charya and other Buddhist systems. The worship of images and an elaborate ritual was introduced. The worship of the Shaktis spread. The Mantrayana and Vajrayana found acceptance. . . ." (*S'akti and S'ākta*, Pp. 42-43)

13. *The Foundations of Indian Culture* (Pp. 183—4)

14. *On Yoga* (Pp. 698)

15. "Man's consciousness has no fixed boundary. On the contrary, it is at root the Infinite Consciousness, which appears in the form of a contraction (*Sankoca*), due to limitation as Shakti in the form of mind and matter. This contraction may be greater or less. As it is gradually loosened, consciousness expands by degrees until, all bonds being gone, it becomes one with the Full Consciousness or Purna. Thus there are, according to common teaching, seven ascending light planes of experience, called Lokas, that is 'what are seen' (*lokayante*) or experienced; and seven dark descending planes, or Talas, that is places'. It will be observed that one name is given from the subjective and the other from the objective standpoint. The centre of these planes is the 'Earth-plane' (*Bhurloka*). This is not the same as experience on earth, for every experience, including the highest and lowest, can be had here. The planes are not like geological strata, though necessity may picture them thus. The Earth-plane is the normal experience. The ascending planes are states of supernormal,and the descending planes of subnormal experience. The highest of the planes is the Truth-plane (*Satyaloka*). Beyond this is the Supreme Experience, which is above all planes, which is Light itself and the love of Shiva and Shakti, the 'Heart of the Supreme Lord (*Hṛdayam Parameśituḥ*). The lowest Tala on the dark side is described in the Puranas with wonderful symbolic imagery as a Place of Darkness where monster serpents, crowned with dim light, live in perpetual anger. Below this is the Shakti of the Lord called

Tamomayi Shakti—that, the Veiling Power of Being in all its infinite intensity. '; (Sir John Woodroffe: *S'akti and S'ākta*, p. 25)

16. "It is necessary to remember the fundamental principle of the Tantra Sastra that man is a microcosm (*kṣudrabrahmāṇḍa*). Whatever exists in the outer universe exists in him. All the Tattvas and the worlds are within him and so are the supreme Shiva-Shakti.

The body may be divided into two main parts, namely the head and trunk on one hand, and the legs on the other. In man, the centre of the body is between these two, at the base of the spine where the legs begin. Supporting the trunk and throughout the whole body there is the spinal cord. This is the axis of the body, just as Mount Meru is the axis of the Earth. Hence man's spine is called Meru-danda, the Meru or axis-staff. The legs and feet are gross matter which show less signs of consciousness than the trunk with its spinal white and grey matter, which trunk itself is greatly subordinate in this respect to the head containing the organ of mind, or physical brain, with its white and grey matter. The position of the white and grey matter in the head and spinal column respectively are reversed. The body and legs below the centre are the seven lower or nether worlds upheld by the sustaining Shaktis of the universe. From the centre upwards, consciousness more freely manifests through the spinal and cerebral centres. Here there are seven upper regions or lokas..These regions, namely Bhuh, Bhuvah, Svah, Tapas, Jana, Mahah, and Satya Lokas correspond with the six centres; five in the trunk, the sixth in the lower cerebral centre; and the seventh in the upper Brain or Satyaloka, the abode of the supreme Shiva-Shakti. . . ." (*Ibid.* p. 433).

17. These Nadis are not the gross physical nerves known to medical Science. They are "Yoga-Nadis and are subtle channels (*vivara*) along which the Pranic currents flow. The term Nadi comes from the root *nad* which means motion. The body is filled with an unaccountable number of Nadis. If they were revealed to the eye the body would present the appearance of a highly complicated chart of ocean currents." (*Ibid.* p. 436)

18. Different computations of the Chakras are given, but these are the main seven. It is to be noted that these Chakras or Lotuses are naturally not visible to the physical eye, but they can be located and felt only by the eye of subtle vision. No wonder when some of the 'modern' scientists dissected the human body to verify the truth of the claims of Indian Yoga in the matter, they found no Chakras inside and had the satisfaction that it was all a typical fantasy woven by the ever-fertile Hindu imagination. "The six Chakras have been identified with the following plexuses commencing from the lowest, the Muladhara; the Sacrococcygeal plexus, the Sacral plexus, the Solar plexus (which forms the great junction of the right and left sympathetic chains Ida and Pingala) with the cerebro-spinal axis. Connected with this is the Lumbar plexus. Then follows the Cardiac plexus (Anahata), Laryngeal plexus, and lastly the Ajna or cerebellum with its two lobes and above this the Manas Chakra or sensorium with its six lobes, the Soma Chakra or middle Cerebrum

and lasly the Sahasrara or upper Cerebrum. To some extent these localizations are yet tentative." (*Ibid.* p. 435)

19. *Introduction to Tantra S'āstra* (p. 58)

20. *Vide* Sri Aurobindo's splendid description of the opening of the Lotuses, in his Epic *Sāvitri* :

A mighty movement rocked the inner space
As if a world were shaken and found its soul :
Out of the Inconscient's soulless mindless Night
A flaming serpent rose released from sleep.
It rose billowing its coils and stood erect
And climbing mightily stormily on its way
It touched her centres with its flaming mouth :
As if a fiery kiss had broken their sleep.
They bloomed and laughed surcharged with light and Bliss ;
Then at the crown it joined the Eternal's space.
In the flower of the head, in the flower of Matter's base,
In each divine stronghold and Nature-knot
It held together the mystic stream which joins
The viewless summits with the unseen depths,
The string of forts that make the frail defence
Safeguarding us against the enormous world,....
All underwent a high celestial change :
Breaking the black Inconscients' blind mute wall,
Effacing the circles of the Ignorance,
Powers and divinities burst flaming forth ;
Each part of the being trembling with delight
Lay overwhelmed with tides of happiness
And saw her hand in every circumstance

And felt her touch in every limb and call;
In the country of the lotus of the head
Which thinking mind has made its busy space,
In the castle of the lotus twixt the brows
Whence it shoots the arrows of its sight and will,
In the passage of the lotus of the throat
Where speech must rise and the expressing mind
And the heart's impulse run towards word and fact,
A glad uplift and a new working came.
The immortal's thoughts displaced our bounded view,
The Immortal's thoughts earth's drab idea and sense;
All things now bore a deeper heavenlier sense.
A glad clear harmony marked their truth's outline,
Re-set the balance and measures of the world.
Each shape showed its occult design, unveiled
God's meaning in it for which it was made
And the vivid splendour of his artist thought.
A channel of the mighty Mother's choice,
The immortal's will took into its calm control
Our blind or erring government of life;
A loose republic once of wants and needs,
Then bowed to the uncertain sovereign mind,
Life now obeyed to a diviner rule
And every act became an act of God.
In the kingdom of the lotus of the heart
Love chanting its pure hymeneal hymn
Made life and body mirrors of sacred joy
And all the emotions gave themselves to God.
In the navel lotus's broad imperial range
Its proud ambitions and its master lusts
Were tamed into instruments of a great calm sway
To do a work of God on earthly soil.
In the narrow nether centres' Petty parts

Its childish game of daily dwarf desires
Was changed into a sweet and boisterous play,
A romp of little gods with life in Time.
In the deep place where once the Serpent slept,
There came a grip on Matter's giant powers
For large utilities in life's little space;
A firm ground was made for Heaven's descending might.

(Book VII, Canto 5)

21. *On Yoga* (Pp. 611—12)

22. *Letters* (First Series, Pp. 226)

23. "The Agamas are divided into three main groups according as the Ishtadevata worshipped is Shakti, Shiva or Vishnu. The first is the Shakta Agama, the second the Shaiva Agama, and the third the Vaishnava Agama, or Pancharatra..Some Agamas are called Vaidik (Vaidika Agama) and some non-Vaidik (Avaidika). The Kurma Purana (XVI. 1) mentions as belonging to the latter, Kapala, Lakula, Vama, Bhairava, Purva, Paschima, Pancharatra, Pashupata and many others. Pashupata again is said to be both Vaidika and Avaidika such as Lakula..Shaivagama is of two kinds, Shrauta and Ashrauta. Shrauta is Shrutisaramaya and of two kinds, Svatantra and Itara. Svatantra is first of ten kinds and then Siddhanta of eighteen kinds. (This is the Shaivasiddhanta Agama with 28 Mula Agamas and 207 Upagamas. It is Shuddadvaita because in it there is no Visheshana. Itara is Shrutisara with numerous varieties....There are several Schools of Shaivas; and there are Shaktas with their nine Amnayas, four Sampradayas (Kerala,

Kashmira, Gauda and Vilasa) each divided into two-fold division of inner and outer worship. There is for instance the Northern Shaiva School called Trika of Kashmir, in which country at one time Tantra Shastras were very prevalent. There is again the Southern Shaiva School called Shaivasiddhanta. The Shaktas who are to be found throughout India are largely prevalent in Bengal and Assam. The Shaktas are rather allied with the Northern Advaita Shaiva than with the others, though in them also there is worship of Shakti. Shiva and Shakti are one and he who worships one necessarily worships the other. But whereas the Shaiva predominantly worships Shiva, the Shakta predominantly worships the Shakti side of the Ardhanarishwara Murti, which is both Shiva and Shakti. The Shaktas have again been divided into three groups..Kaula or Shakta Shastras with 64 Tantras; the Mishra with 8 Tantras; the Samaya group..of which 5 are mentioned.. Pancharatra literature is very considerable, one hundred and eight works being mentioned..The Trika school has many Tantras of which the leading one is Malinivijaya. The Svachchhanda Tantra comes next..The Shaivasiddhanta has 28 leading Tantras and a large number of Upagamas, such as Taraka Tantra, Vama Tantra and others..The Sammohana Tantra mentions (Ch. VI) 64 Tantras, 327 Upatantras, as also Yamalas, Damaras, Samhitas and other Scriptures of the Shakta class; 32 Tantras, 125 Upatantras, as also Yamalas, Damaras, Puranas and other Scriptures of the Shaiva class; 75 Tantras, 205 Upatantras, as also Yamalas, Damaras, Samhitas of the Vaishnava class; numerous Tantras and other scriptures of the Ganapatya and Saura classes and a number of Puranas, Upapuranas and other variously named Scriptures of the Bauddha class. It then mentions (Ch. VII) over 500 Tantras and nearly the same amount of Upatantras, of some 22 Agamas, Chinagama, Buddhagama, Jaina, Pashupata, Kapalika Pancharatra, Bhairava and others. There is thus a vast mass of Tantras in the Agamas belonging to differing schools of doctrine and practice.." (Sir John Woodroffe: *S'akti and S'ākta* pp. 35-37.)

24. *Akṣetravit kṣetravidam hyaprāt sapraiti*
kṣetravidānuśiṣṭaḥ

etad vai bhadram anuśāsanasyota śrutim
vindatyanjasinam

(Rig Veda X. 32.7)

25. Assuming the Form of a Teacher all merciful, Ishwara liberates by means of initiation. (*Kulārṇava*)

26. *Mantra-pradāna kāle hi mānuṣe naganandini*
adhiṣṭhānam bhavet tatra Mahākālasya Sankari..
Ato na gurutā devī mānuṣe nātra saṁśāyaḥ. (*Yogini Tantra. I*)

At the time the Mantra is given, O Shankari, the Mahakala is manifest in man (Guru)....There is no doubt the human is not the Guru.

27. These powers are of many kinds and their activities although natural to their own norm appear as 'miraculous' when they are set to function on our physical plane accustomed to a different order of phenomenon. Of these Siddhis there are eight that are specially mentioned in the Sastra viz. Anima, Mahima, Laghima, Prapti, Prakamya, Ishitva, Vashitva, and Kamavasayitva. "*Animā* is minuteness so fine as to be

imperceptible by the senses, *Mahimā* is greatness. *Laghimā* is lightness. *Prāpti* is knowledge of all which the Jiva perceives by His senses, due to the fact that Ishwara is the presiding Devata of the senses of all living creatures. *Prākāmya* is the enjoyment of all things heard, seen, etc. *Iśitva* is the application of Shakti or the spreading of the Shakti of His own maya over every Jiva in the universe. *Vaśitva* is freedom from the three gunas of sattva, rajas, and tamas. *Kāmavasāyitva* is the attainment of whatever I desire." [*Srimadbhāgavata* quoted in *Principles of Tantra* Ed. Arthur Avalon.]

28. *Lights on the Ancients* (Pp. 33—37)

29. Speaking of the Indian tradition in this regard, it is interesting to follow Sri Kapali Sastriar in hir tracing of the origin of the Gods of the Tantra to the Immortal Luminaries of the ancient Veda :

"The Gods of the Hindu religion are in fact Tantric Gods. And the Gods of the Tantra are not sudden arrivals on the scene. They are really a continuation of the line of Gods of the Veda. Not in the same form and name of course, but with necessary modifications inevitable with the incidence of time on tradition.

The Vedic Gods, as we have noted elsewhere while dealing with subject in fuller detail, have a twofold aspect to the seers of the Veda. In their exterior aspect they are essentially Nature-powers. Agni is the elemental fire, Indra the rain-god, Surya the solar body, Maruts the storm-gods and so on. But they have another, psychological character also and this was more important to those initiated into the mystery of the Vedic religion. These Gods are powers indeed, but not merely the powers of Nature. They are rather higher Powers, Personalities of the Godhead having Cosmic field for their action. There are also lower gods who preside over the elemental forces of nature, over movements in the physical world and also movements in the inner world of man. Besides presiding over the Fire element in creation, Agni is looked upon as the deity controlling and promoting the upward flame, the *agni* in man stationed on the various levels of his being—as the *agni* in life, *prāṇa-agni*, as the flame of aspiration in the heart, as the consuming quest for knowledge in the mind, He has other functions also. Similarly, Indra is the God governing the higher regions of the luminous mind, the Maruts controlling and contributing to the life-forces and thought-powers of man. Thus the Gods are cosmic Powers with specific functions in the external world of Nature as well as with more important and significant charge in the inner world that supports it from behind and above. The sages of the Tantras carried on the tradition in the essentials that mattered. The Gods are very much the same here also, only the external functions in their physical aspect which predominate in the common mind of the early times have been appropriately relegated to the background when they are not altogether dispensed with. Thus Agni of the Veda continues in the Tantra, with a change of name certainly, yet with the same functions and even the new name, Kumara, Child, is significant for the Agni-origin it preserves. Agni is Kumara, Child of the Supreme Shiva. In the Rig Veda Agni is in the forefront of the Gods, their guide, their messenger. Here he is their chief of powers who leads them to victory, the commander behind whom they line up. In the Veda Agni is regarded by the seers as the all-effecting and all-knowing pilot of their journey. Kumara is also looked up to for his immense store of knowledge and wisdom by these seers of later times. Again, the mighty Indra is there, but in the Tantra and the Puranas his part is taken up by Rudra the powerful who brooks no obstacle. The hosts of Indra,—the Maruts—continue as the *pramathas* of Rudra. Indra the *marutvān*, leader of the hosts of Maruts, the storm-gods or life-powers, continues to play his effective part as Rudra the lord of the *pramathas*, Pramathanatha. The Sun, the Highest God of the Veda is also here as Vishnu—a name which is applied to the Supreme sun in the Rig Veda itself. Aditi the mother of All is not there under the same nomenclature, but there is the Supreme Shakti, called variously Uma, Gouri, etc. All the important Gods are there. The other minor gods with mainly physical functions and less of the psychological have been consigned to the position of the *Dik-pālakas*, guardians of the several quarters or of some other minor importance. Newer Gods have arrived, true but the older ones have not been altogether supplanted and totally forgotten, they retain their due supremacy though in different form." (*Jurther Lights : The Veda and the Tantra*, Pp. 173-177)

30. *Ibid.* Pp. 186.

31. *Yantram mantramayam proktam mantrātmā devataiva hi.*

Naturally there are a number of Yantras, some of them with highly intricate designs. Each angle, each section of the Figures has a particular significance representing certain truths on the subtler planes. One of the most famous of these Yantras is the Sri Chakra of which the *Yogini Hridaya* says: "When the Supreme Shakti of Her own will assumes the form of the Universe and sees Her own becoming then the Sri Chakra comes into being."

32. "Some particular articles vary with the Puja. Thus, Tulasi leaf is issued in the Vishnu-puja; Bael leaf (bilva) in the Shiva-puja, and to the Devi is offered the scarlet hibiscus (Jaba). The Mantras said and other ritual details may vary according to the Devata worshipped. The seat (*āsana*) of the worshipper is purified as also the Upachara. Salutation is made to the Shakti of support (*Ādhāra-S'akti*) the power sustaining all. Obstructive Spirits are driven away (*bhūtāpasarpaṇa*) and the ten quarters are fenced from their attack by striking the earth three times with the left foot, uttering the weapon-mantra (*astrabija*) 'Phat', and by snapping the fingers round the head." (Sir John Woodroffe: *S'akti and S'ākta*, p. 349)

33. The right foot is placed on the left thigh the left foot on the right thigh; hands crossed and placed similarly on the thighs; the chin placed on the breast and the gaze fixed on the tip of the nose.

34. Mudras are said to please the Gods, *devānām modadā mudrā*.

Mudrā has three meanings: gesture in worship; postures of body in the Yoga system; special parched cereal in secret worship. Mudras are traditionally counted to be 108. The following remarks of Sir John Woodroffe on the subject will be found interesting:

"The Mudra of Upasana is the outward bodily expression of inner resolve which it at the same time intensifies. We all know how in speaking we emphasise and illustrate our thought by gesture. So in welcoming (*āvāhana*) the Devata, an appropriate gesture is made. When veiling anything, the hands assume that position (*avagunṭhana mudrā*). Thus again in making offering (*arghya*) a gesture is made which represents a fish (*matsya mudrā*) by placing the right hand on the back of the left and extending the two thumbs finlike on each side of the hands. This is done as the expression of the wish and intention that the vessel which contains water may be regarded as an ocean with fish and all other aquatic animals. The Sadhaka says to the Devata of his worship, 'This is but a small offering of water in fact, but so far as my desire to honour you is concerned, regard it as if I were offering you an ocean.' The Yoni in the form of an inverted triangle represents the Devi. By the Yoni Mudra the fingers form a traingle as a manifestation of the inner desire that the Devi should come and place Herself before the worshipper, for the Yoni is Her Pitha or Yantra." (*S'akti and S'ākta*, p. 351).

35. *Bhūta-S'uddhi* should be well accomplished before one becomes fit to worship the Deity. (*Mantra-mahodadhi Taranga* I)

36. Vide pages 11-12

37. *Further Lights : The Veda and the Tantra* (Pp. 240-245)

38. "Nyasa also has certain physical effects, for these are dependent on the state of mind. The pure restful state of meditation is reflected in the body of the

worshipper. The actions of Nyasa are said to stimulate the nerve centres and to effect the proper distribution of the Shaktis of the human frame according to their dispositions and relations, preventing discord and distraction during worship, which itself holds steady the state thus induced." (Sir John Woodroffe: *S'akti and S'ākta*, p. 355)

Nyasa is not peculiar to the Hindu Worship alone: Zimmer notes an interesting correspondence to it among the Christians. He points out: "An example of nyasa in Christian worship is the making of the sign of the Cross, touching first the forehead ('in the name of the Father'), then the breast ('and of the son'), the left shoulder ('and of the Holy'), right shoulder ('Ghost') and finally bringing the palms together in the position of salutation known to Hindus as anjali, which is in the classic Christian Mudra of prayer ('Amen'). (*Philosophies of India*)

39. *Vide* also Sir John Woodroffe in *S'akti and S'ākta*, (p. 384):

"For the worship of Shakti the Panchatattva are declared to be essential. Without the Panchatattva in one form or another Shaktipuja cannot be performed (*Mahanirvāṇa* V. 23-24). The reason of this is that those who worship Shakti, worship Divinity as Creatrix and in the form of the universe. If She appears as and in natural function, She must be worshipped therewith, otherwise, as the Tantra cited says, worship is fruitless. The Mother of the Universe must be worshipped with these five elements, namely, wine, meat, fish, grain and woman or their substitutes. By their use the universe (Jagadbrahmanda) itself is used as the article of worship (Upachara). The Mahanirvana (VII. 103-111) says that wine which gives joy and dispels the sorrows of men is Fire; flesh which nourishes and increases the strengh of mind and body is Air; fish which increases generative power is Water, cereals grown on earth and which are the basis of life are Earth, and sexual union, which is the root of the world and the origin of all creation is Ether. They thus signify the Power (Shakti) which produces all fiery elements, all terrestrial and aquatic life, all vegetable life, and the will, knowledge and action of the Supreme Prakriti productive of the great Bliss which accompanies the process of creation."

40. Ibid. p. 399

41. Ibid. pp. 398-399

"All things spring from and are at basis Ananda or Bliss whether it is perceived or not. The latter, therefore, exists in two forms; as Mukti which is Anandasvarupa or transcendent, unlimited, one, and as Bhukti or limited worldly bliss. Tantric Sadhana claims to give both, because the one of dual aspect is both. The Vira thus knows that Jivatma and Paramatma are one; that it is the One Shiva who appears in the form of the multitude of men and who acts, suffers, and enjoys through them. The Shivasvarupa is Bliss itself (*Paramānanda*). The Bliss of enjoyment (*Bhogānanda*) is one and the same Bliss manifesting itself through the limiting forms of mind and matter. Who is it who then enjoys and what Bliss is thus manifested? It is Shiva in the forms of the Universe (*Viśvarūpa*) who enjoys, and the manifested bliss is a limited form of that Supreme Bliss which in His ultimate nature He is. In his physical functions the Vira identifies himself with the collectivity of all functions which constitute the universal life. He is then consciously Shiva in the form of his own and other lives. As Shiva exists both in His *Svarūpa* and as the world (*Viśvarūpa*), so union may, and should, be had with Him in both aspects. These are known as *Sūkṣma* and *Sthūla Sāmarasya* respectively. The Sadhaka is taught not to think that we are one with the Divine in Liberation only, but here and now, in every act we do. For in truth all such is Shakti. It is Shiva who as Shakti is acting in and through the Sadhaka."

42. *The Supramental Manifestation* (Pp. 48)

43. *Kulārṇava Tantra* (Chap. XIII)

44. Zimmer in *Philosophies of India.*

45. *Vide* Sir John Woodroffe: *S'akti and S'ākta* (pp. 388-389)

"One must not think of these substances as mere gross matter in the form of wine, meat and so forth, nor on woman as mere woman; nor upon the rite as a mere common meal. The usual daily rites must be performed in the morning, midday and evening. These are elaborate and take up a large part of the day. Bhutashuddhi is accomplished, at which time the Sadhaka thinks that a Deva body has arisen as his own. Various Nyasas are done. Mental worship is performed of the Devi, the Adya Kalika, who is thought of as being in red raiment seated on a red lotus. Her body dark like a rain-cloud, Her forehead gleaming with the light of the crescent moon. Japa of Mantra is then done and outer worship follows. A further elaborate ritual succeeds.

"I pause here to ask the reader to conceive the nature of the mind and disposition of the Sadhaka who has sincerely performed these rites. Is it likely to be lustful or gluttonous? The curse is removed from the wine and the Sadhaka meditates upon the union of Deva and Devi in it. Wine is to be considered as Devata. After the consecration of the wine, the meat, fish and grain are purified and are made like unto nectar. The Shakti is sprinkled with Mantra and made the Sadhaka's own. She is Devi Herself in the form of woman. The wine is charged with Mantras ending with the realisation when Homa is done, that offering is made of the excellent nectar of 'This-ness' (*Idantā*) held in the cup of 'I-ness' (*Ahantā*) into the Fire which is the Supreme I-ness (*Parāhanta*)."

46. *On Yoga.* (Pp. 47)

47. *Vide* Note No. 29.

48. *Vide* Sri Aurobindo: *Foundations of Indian Culture* (pp. 172-174)

"The Purano-Tantric stage of the religion was once decried by European critics and Indian reformers as a base and ignorant degradation of an earlier and purer religion. It was rather an effort, successful in a great measure, to open the general mind of the people to a higher and deeper range of inner truth and experience and feeling. Much of the adverse criticism once heard proceeded from a total ignorance of the sense and intention of this worship. Much of this criticism has been uselessly concentrated on side-paths and aberrations which could hardly be avoided in this immensely audacious experimental widening of the basis of the culture. For there was a catholic attempt to draw towards the spiritual truth minds of all qualities and people of all classes. Much was lost of the profound psychic knowledge of the Vedic seers, but much also of new knowledge was developed, untrodden ways were opened and a hundred gates discovered into the Infinite. If we try to see the essential sense and aim of this development and the intrinsic value of its forms and means and symbols, we shall find that this evolution followed upon the early Vedic form very much for the same reason as Catholic Christianity replaced the mysteries and sacrifices of the early Pagan religions. For in both cases the outward basis of the early religion spoke to the outward physical mind of the people and took that as the starting point of its appeal. But the new evolution tried to awaken a more inner mind even in the common man, to lay hold on his inner vital and emotional nature, to support all by an awakening of the soul and to lead him through these things towards a highest spiritual truth. It attempted in fact to bring the mass into the temple of the spirit rather than leave them in the outer precincts. The outward physical sense was satisfied through its aesthetic turn by a picturesque temple worship, by numerous ceremonies, by the use of physical images; but these were given a psychic-emotional sense and direction that was open to the heart and imagination of the ordinary man and not reserved for the deeper sight of the elect or the strenuous tapasya of the initiates. The secret initiation remained but was now a condition for the passage from the surface psycho-emotional and religious to a profounder psychic-spiritual truth and experience.

Nothing essential was touched in its core by this new orientation ; but the instruments, atmosphere, field of religious experience underwent a considerable change. The Vedic godheads were to the mass of their worshippers divine powers who presided over the workings of the outward life of the physical cosmos ; the Puranic Trinity had even for the multitude a predominant psycho-religious and spiritual significance. Its more external significance, for instance, the functions of cosmic creation, preservation and destruction, were only a dependent fringe of these profundities that alone touched the heart of its mystery. The central spiritual truth remained in both systems the same, the truth of the One in many aspects. The Trinity is a triple form of the one supreme Godhead and Brahman ; the Shaktis are energies of the one Energy of the highest divine Being. But this greatest religious truth was no longer reserved for the initiated few ; it was now more and more brought powerfully, widely and intensely home to the general mind and feeling of the people. Even the so-called henotheism of the Vedic idea was prolonged add heightened in the larger and simpler worship of Vishnu or Shiva as the one universal and highest Godhead of whom all others are living forms and powers. The idea of the Divinity in man was popularised to an extraordinary extent, not only the occasional manifestation of the Divine in humanity which founded the worship of the Avataras, but the Presence discoverable in the heart of every creature. The systems of Yoga developed themselves on the same common basis. All led or helped to lead through many kinds of psycho-physical inner vital, inner mental and psycho-spiritual methods to the common aim of all Indian spirituality, a greater consciousness and a more or less complete union with the One and Divine or else an immergence of the individual soul in the Absolute. The Purano-Tantric system was a wide, assured and many-sided endeavour, unparallelled in its power, insight, amplitude, to provide the race with a basis of generalised psycho-religious experience from which man could rise through knowledge, works or love or through any other fundamental power of his nature to some established supreme experience and highest absolute status. "

References to *S'akti and S'ākta* are to the Seventh Edition (1969).

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